

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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 IN RE: :
 :
 THE EL FARO INCIDENT OFF THE: NTSB Accident No.
 COAST OF THE BAHAMAS ON : DCA16MM001
 OCTOBER 1, 2015 :
 :
 -----:

INTERVIEW OF: KEVIN STITH

Wednesday,
 October 7, 2015

Jacksonville, Florida

BEFORE:

MICHAEL KUCHARSKI, NTSB
 CARRIE BELL, NTSB
 KENNETH BRAGG, NTSB
 JON FURUKAWA, NTSB
 BRIAN YOUNG, NTSB
 [REDACTED] U.S. Coast Guard
 [REDACTED] U.S. Coast Guard
 PATTY FINSTERBUSCH, TOTE Services
 JIM FISHER-ANDERSEN, TOTE Services
 LOUIS O'DONNELL, ABS
 [REDACTED] U.S. Coast Guard
 MELISSA SERRIDGE, TOTE Services
 [REDACTED] U.S. Coast Guard

PRESENT ON BEHALF OF THE INTERVIEWEE:

STEPHEN P. KYNE, ESQ., BURKE & PARSONS

This transcript was produced from audio
 provided by the National Transportation Safety Board.

1 P-R-O-C-E-E-D-I-N-G-S

2 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. Captain Stith, I'll
3 ask you again. We would start the interview process,
4 and we would like to record your interview. If you
5 want a copy of the transcript, of course, it will be
6 transcribed, you're more than welcome to have that.
7 Okay?

8 CAPTAIN SMITH: Okay. Thank you.

9 Good morning, everyone. Thank you very much
10 for coming to this first interview.

11 My name is Mike Kucharski. I'm the Group
12 Chairman for Operations for the National Transportation
13 Safety Board.

14 This is in the investigation of the sinking
15 or the incident involving the El Faro cargo ship.

16 As just some housekeeping, if you will, or
17 to go through the format, I would like to go around the
18 room and have everybody identify themselves.

19 But let me first start and say that we're
20 here to just develop the probable cause on what
21 happened in this accident. We don't have any
22 enforcement powers or anything like that. We would
23 just like to get to the bottom of what happened and as
24 part of our efforts to prevent this, hopefully, from
25 happening again.

1 We see it there's no winners or losers.
2 Hopefully, the public will be better aware, and
3 especially the mariners that sail out there.

4 You have a right to a personal
5 representative, which I understand that you have. Mr.
6 Kyne, I'll speak to that right now. The personal
7 representative, you can consult with him, but you will
8 take no active part in the actual questioning or
9 objection to any of the form of the questions. Okay?

10 MR. KYNE: Understood.

11 MR. KUCHARSKI: Let me go into it again a
12 little bit of the process once we start on this, the
13 actual interview. I'm going to ask you to go ahead and
14 just freeflow it, if you will, your experience,
15 background and experiences.

16 And then, everyone, once Captain Stith
17 finishes up, I would like to start around the room in
18 an orderly fashion, allow you to ask a bank of
19 questions, if you have questions there. If there is a
20 followup to that particular clarification of what
21 Captain Stith says, I will allow an interruption of
22 that person who has the floor to ask their questions to
23 ask for the clarification. Otherwise, I would like
24 that same person to continue with their questions.
25 We'll go around the room, and then, we'll do it again,

1 until we exhaust all the questions. You may have some
2 follow-on questions. Okay?

3 MR. KYNE: Can I ask one question? Are
4 there any other parties here other than the
5 investigators?

6 MR. KUCHARSKI: When we go around the room,
7 they will identify themselves, yes.

8 MR. KYNE: Okay.

9 MR. KUCHARSKI: Yes. No, but they're all
10 part of the groups, if you will.

11 MR. KYNE: They're all part of the group?

12 MR. KUCHARSKI: They're all part of the
13 groups, yes.

14 MR. KYNE: Yes.

15 MR. KUCHARSKI: Those are the only people
16 that are allowed to be in here. Okay?

17 Okay, it's approximately 10:42 on the 7th of
18 October, 2015. We're at the Marriott Hotel in
19 Jacksonville, Florida, and this is the interview of
20 Captain Stith, [REDACTED] (sic) Stith.

21 So, Captain Stith?

22 CAPT. STITH: Kevin. Kevin.

23 MR. KUCHARSKI: Kevin. I'm sorry.

24 CAPT. STITH: Yes.

25 MR. KUCHARSKI: Kevin Stith.

1 Would you please start by giving us your
2 full name and spell it out for us, please?

3 CAPT. STITH: It's Kevin Patrick Stith,
4 K-E-V-I-N P-A-T-R-I-C-K Stith, S-T-I-T-H.

5 MR. KUCHARSKI: Thank you.

6 And I would also like to at this time just
7 go around the room and each person to identify
8 themselves, starting with Brian.

9 MR. YOUNG: I'm Brian Young. I'm the
10 Engineering Group Chairman for the NTSB.

11 MR. KYNE: Stephen Kyne, K-Y-N-E, Burke &
12 Parsons. I'm the counsel for Captain Stith.

13 MR. KUCHARSKI: You're his personal
14 representative? Further clarify that.

15 MR. KYNE: Personal representative.

16 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay.

17 MR. FURUKAWA: Jon Furukawa, NTSB. I'm the
18 Survival Group Chairman.

19 MS. BELL: Carrie Bell, Human Performance
20 Group Chairman, NTSB.

21 MR. BRAGG: Kenneth Bragg, Human Performance
22 Investigator, NTSB.

23 MR. [REDACTED] [REDACTED] United States
24 Coast Guard, member of the Human Performance Group.

25 MR. KUCHARSKI: Would you please repeat

1 that?

2 MR. [REDACTED] Yes. [REDACTED] United
3 States Coast Guard, civilian investigator, part of the
4 Human Performance Group.

5 MR. [REDACTED] [REDACTED] with the U.S. Coast
6 Guard on the Engineering Group, Marine Inspector.

7 MS. FINSTERBUSCH: Patty Finsterbusch from
8 TOTE Services. I'm on the Survivor --

9 MR. KUCHARSKI: The Survival Group?

10 MS. FINSTERBUSCH: The Survival Group.

11 MR. FISKE-ANDERSON: Jim Fiske-Anderson
12 from TOTE Services, on the NTSB Engineering Team.

13 MR. O'DONNELL: Louis O'Donnell, Assistant
14 Chief Surveyor, ABS, and I'm on the Engineering Group.
15 Also, I'm going to be the party coordinator for the
16 ABS.

17 MR. KUCHARSKI: Just so we get this, maybe
18 they may not hear it on the tape.

19 MR. O'DONNELL: Again?

20 MR. KUCHARSKI: Please.

21 MR. O'DONNELL: Louis O'Donnell, Assistant
22 Chief Surveyor, ABS. I'm part of the Engineering Group
23 and, also, will be the party coordinator for ABS.

24 MS. SERRIDGE: Melissa Serridge, HR Manager
25 for TOTE Services, and I'm part of their Human

1 Performance Group.

2 MR. [REDACTED] [REDACTED] with the U.S.
3 Coast Guard, part of the Deck Operations Group.

4 MR. [REDACTED] [REDACTED] U.S. Coast Guard, on
5 the Sector Jacksonville, Chief of Operations, Chief of
6 Response. I'm standing in on a temporary basis until
7 the permanent party comes tomorrow, but I'm on the
8 Survivor Group.

9 MR. KUCHARSKI: The Survivor Group?

10 Okay. Thank you very much.

11 Again, my name is Mike Kucharski, and I'm
12 the Group Chairman for Operations for the NTSB.

13 Okay. So, Captain Stith, would you give us
14 your background a little bit, your schooling, maritime-
15 related schooling, and some of your education, your
16 maritime education?

17 CAPT. STITH: Yes. I graduated, United
18 States Merchant Marine Academy in 1996. I sailed in
19 the Gulf of the Mexico for a short period on offshore
20 supply boats, oceangoing tugs. I worked ashore for
21 approximately one year as a marine inspector/cargo
22 inspector, representing charters, stevedores, shippers
23 in matters of claims, damages, bunker surveys, on-hire
24 and off-hire surveys.

25 I returned to sea in 1998, sailed on various

1 tankers for approximately six years, and then,
2 transitioned to mainly government vessels. Sailed on
3 Military Sealift Command and, also, Maritime
4 Administration vessels.

5 I upgraded to Master's unlimited ocean in
6 2005, and since 2005, have been sailing as a Master or
7 Chief Mate of various government vessels and now
8 commercial vessels, for TOTE Services, Marspawn
9 (phonetic) Limited, Pacific Gulf Marine, and AMSEA.

10 So, over that time, I was also in the United
11 States Navy Reserve for approximately six years, and I
12 was discharged.

13 Other than that, my experiences include
14 surveying, being a pollution control representative on
15 a subcontract basis, and I have also worked as a
16 subcontractor port engineer for TOTE Services during
17 drydocking of various government vessels.

18 So, I've got an unlimited Master's License.
19 I also have a minor in engineering, marine engineering,
20 a QMEDS qualification as an electrician, oiler, junior
21 engineer, and deck engineer. I think that's about it.

22 MR. KUCHARSKI: Very good. Thank you.

23 I would like to jump forward now into when
24 you came to work for TOTE Services. Can you tell us
25 about when you started, how long you have been working

1 with TOTE, and then, went to your role, your first
2 role, or your roles on your different ships that you
3 were on?

4 CAPT. STITH: I've worked with TOTE Services
5 previously inter-American shipping and inter-Ugland
6 shipping previously in my seagoing career.
7 Commercially, I came onboard with TOTE Services in
8 August of 2015 and joined the El Faro in San Juan,
9 Puerto Rico; sailed on the El Faro as Chief Mate for
10 approximately four weeks, and then, transitioned to the
11 Master of the El Yunque; sailed on the El Yunque for
12 also approximately four weeks as Master.

13 MR. KUCHARSKI: And the El Yunque, what kind
14 of a vessel is that? Is that similar to the El Faro?

15 CAPT. STITH: The El Yunque is the sister
16 ship to the El Faro. We travel the same route and
17 visit the same ports and, basically, trade in the same
18 services as the El Faro.

19 MR. KUCHARSKI: Could you just explain for
20 the group what a "sister to" means?

21 CAPT. STITH: The sister vessel would be
22 basically the same design, construction, and age of the
23 other vessel. We're nearly identical in construction
24 and type, engineering plant, and superstructure, bridge
25 equipment, those type of things. There are minor

1 differences, maybe a ladder here or a ladder there,
2 pump locations, you know, different things, but very,
3 very minor differences.

4 MR. KUCHARSKI: Great. Thank you.

5 So, you said you came on the El Faro, which
6 is the vessel that had the incident, in August of this
7 past year. Could you walk us through your duties as
8 the Chief Officer and the basic operations?

9 CAPT. STITH: Yes. As Chief Mate of the El
10 Faro, you're a watch-standing deck officer; also, in
11 charge of the safe loading of the vessel, stability of
12 the vessel. We also maintain various records and
13 handle the safety training of the crew onboard the
14 vessel. You're in charge of coordinating the ballast
15 operations and cargo operations with the shore-side
16 personnel and the engineering department; coordinating
17 the ballast loading and discharge, the reefer,
18 refrigerated container, loading and discharge, the
19 electrical supply, and making sure that the reefer
20 containers are maintained properly in conjunction with
21 the engine department, shore-side personnel.

22 You're also responsible for the safe
23 management of the deck department. As a department
24 head, you're in charge of managing rest hours and work
25 hours, managing their overtime and the general

1 maintenance of the deck side of the vessel.

2 Underway, you stand a bridge watch,
3 typically, from 0400 in the morning to 0800 and 1600 in
4 the evening to 2000. During that time, you stand a
5 regular bridge navigational watch and have a lookout
6 with you.

7 That's the typical duties of the Chief Mate
8 on the El Faro.

9 MR. KUCHARSKI: When you stood your bridge
10 watch as an officer in charge of the navigational
11 watch?

12 CAPT. STITH: Yes.

13 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. Would you now tell us
14 about your duties, then, when you went from Chief Mate
15 on El Faro and you said, then, you went as Master on
16 the El Yunque?

17 CAPT. STITH: Yes.

18 MR. KUCHARSKI: Could you spell that, El
19 Yunque?

20 CAPT. STITH: El Yunque, E-L space
21 Y-U-N-Q-U-E.

22 As Master of the El Yunque, you're in charge
23 of everything on the vessel, the safe operation,
24 navigation, and the welfare of the crew; managing the
25 payroll system, the overtime budget, probably

1 overseeing the maintenance and requisitioning; managing
2 the steward's department and the engineer department.
3 Also, managing the interaction between shore-side
4 personnel and the vessel; making sure that the ship's
5 schedule is monitored and maintained, that we have
6 proper communications, and that everybody is basically
7 working safe, doing their job, and that we're providing
8 a safe working environment for everybody. Basically,
9 maintaining the company's ISM policies and objectives.
10 And that's it.

11 MR. KUCHARSKI: Would you say that part of
12 your duties was the overall navigation of the vessel,
13 looking at weather and weather routing, and things like
14 that?

15 CAPT. STITH: That's correct. Making sure
16 that the deck officers are following procedures, that
17 they are following my standing orders, and that the
18 vessel is navigated safely and properly at all times.

19 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. Would you explain to
20 the group -- you mentioned about the overall operation
21 of the vessel and the cargo -- the type of ship this is
22 and the types of cargo that was carried, the different
23 types?

24 CAPT. STITH: I'll just need a second to
25 think about it.

1 There's quite a few types of cargo that
2 these vessels carry. They range from empty containers,
3 shipping containers, fully-loaded containers, ISO tank
4 containers, refrigerating containers, mainly on the
5 main deck.

6 Below decks on the second, third, and fourth
7 decks, typically, they are containers, shipping
8 containers that are on chassis, an 19-wheeler
9 tractor/trailer chassis. Those are driven onboard the
10 vessel via a ramp that is connected to the vessel from
11 shore side. The ship uses its own inherent rigging or
12 rigging that's onboard the vessel, davits, pulleys,
13 blocks, wenches that wench the ramp into place on the
14 starboard quarter, on the starboard aft end of the
15 ship. The ramp is connected to the ship, set in place,
16 and vehicles/trailers are driven on. They're driven
17 into a location that is predetermined by the shore-side
18 stow planners. And then, they are secured by shore-
19 side personnel, the longshoremen or lashing gangs, as
20 they may be called.

21 They will be driven on, secured. There are
22 various securing methods for various types of cargo.
23 The typical chassis container arrangement is secured
24 into place with vehicle-lashing assemblies, VLAs, which
25 are basically chain assemblies with hooks and turn

1 buckles. They get tightened, hand-tightened or through
2 mechanical means like a ratchet or an impact wrench.

3 They also are secured to the deck with a
4 proprietary securing system called a Roloc system,
5 which is basically a stand, a metal stand, at the front
6 end of the chassis, trailer, that gets secured-in with
7 a physical locking mechanism into what's typically
8 called a button, or it looks similar to a container
9 footing, a cast footing that's welded to the deck.

10 So, it's typically secured to the vessel
11 through a minimum of four lashing chains, this Roloc
12 stand, and a mechanical securing button. So, it
13 basically gets tightened and wedged-in in that
14 location. All those are provided and approved through
15 the Cargo-Securing Manual approved by the American
16 Bureau of Shipping.

17 Other types of cargo that can be stowed on
18 the second deck and below decks are vehicles, trailers,
19 basically anything that's on a trailer, anything that
20 can be towed on with a forklift. We've had everything
21 from boat trailers, jet skis, you know, speedboats.
22 They also have other oversized cargo that won't fit on
23 a flatbed trailer, anything from a back-end loader,
24 steamrollers, heavy equipment, mobile cranes, different
25 things. Anything, if it can be towed on or driven on,

1 it can be securely stowed on the second deck.

2 Those types of cargo are secured with
3 ratchet straps where they can't be secured with lashing
4 chains. The ratchet straps go to D-rings that are
5 welded to the deck.

6 The other type of cargo that is most
7 commonly carried on that second deck are animal
8 trailers with various types of animals, typically
9 cattle, horses, goats, sheep, things of that nature.
10 And those trailers are also accompanied by
11 supernumeraries or what we call cowboys that tend to
12 them and care for the animals en route.

13 Typically, below decks on the fourth deck
14 and on the ramps, they also stow regular POVs or
15 vehicles. We've had everything from monster trucks to
16 Lamborghinis and Ferraris to the regular Honda or
17 Toyota Corollas, things of that nature, both loaded and
18 going both directions, northbound and southbound
19 voyages.

20 So, those are typically the types of cargo
21 that are loaded below decks. They're not only stowed
22 on the level decks, but also on the ramps; also stowed
23 using the same type of securing methods, the lashing
24 chains and the Rolocs.

25 Up on deck, in addition to the various types

1 of shipping containers, there's various sizes of
2 shipping containers, everything from 20-foot containers
3 to 40-foot, 43-foot, 53-foot, high-cube, high-capacity
4 containers. All those containers have different
5 securing arrangements on deck, consisting of twist-lock
6 footings and lashing bars and turn buckles. The
7 lashing bars and turn buckles are applied in accordance
8 with the Cargo-Securing Manual. Typically, the bottom
9 row of every set of container is lashed with a cross,
10 aforeships' cross of a minimum of two containers,
11 outside containers, with a lashing bar and a turn
12 buckle. In addition to the twist locks that connect
13 the containers to the main deck of the vessel, there
14 are also double-acting twist locks in between
15 containers, container stacks. That's the typical
16 lashing arrangement on deck.

17 I think that about covers the cargo aspect
18 of it.

19 MR. KUCHARSKI: That's okay. Just a follow-
20 on on the twist locks, can you explain to the group
21 what that actually is?

22 CAPT. STITH: A twist lock is in this case
23 what they call a semi-automatic fitting that has a cone
24 on top and a cone on the bottom, and inside there's
25 mechanical linkage that, once the container is set on

1 top of it, it's spring-loaded and it turns to secure
2 that corner of the container in place.

3 To undo that twist lock, a pole has to be
4 connected to a pull wire and, depending if you're
5 unlocking the bottom container or the top container,
6 you pull the wire or you rotate it in one direction or
7 the other, and it releases the spring-loaded mechanism,
8 which releases basically the securing or the wedge on
9 the top or the bottom.

10 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay, great. Thank you.
11 So, it's at the corners, just for the --

12 CAPT. STITH: Yes, the four corners on the
13 top and the bottom, obviously, except for the top row
14 of the containers.

15 MR. KUCHARSKI: So, just for an overall
16 picture, the containers that go on the deck, the bottom
17 row is somehow fastened to the deck?

18 CAPT. STITH: Yes.

19 MR. KUCHARSKI: And then, row by row --

20 CAPT. STITH: The bottom row of containers
21 is secured with the twist locks, and then, the outer
22 two containers on every row is secured with lashing
23 bars and turn buckles. They connect to the deck
24 through PATeyes or what's commonly called a dog ear.
25 And that's where the turn buckles are secured.

1 MR. KUCHARSKI: Great.

2 I would like to start the questioning, then,
3 to go around the room to get to the particular specific
4 questions.

5 CAPT. STITH: Sure.

6 MR. KUCHARSKI: And if there's no objection,
7 I would like to go ahead and start.

8 When you mentioned the securing systems that
9 we were just talking about, the chain binders and the
10 rolling stock especially, did you ever have any
11 problems with the way items were stowed or they were
12 secured and, if so, how did you handle that?

13 CAPT. STITH: In my experience both on the
14 El Faro and the El Yunque, we typically did not have
15 issues with the manner in which things were stowed or
16 secured. I've remarks a couple of times to our office
17 personnel that we're fortunate that we get the same
18 longshoremen and the same securing gangs every time.
19 They know where all the equipment is. They know how to
20 properly apply it. They know that we go behind them
21 and check them, and if we have any issues, that we
22 notify them right away.

23 During the loading and the stowing, even
24 though it is a high-operational tempo, they keep up
25 with it. We also have a Mate on deck that checks

1 everything as they go along.

2 Pre-departure or post-departure, you know,
3 from the port, in the two months of experience that
4 I've had, we haven't had any issues or any lashings
5 that were left off or unsecured or even slack.

6 During the voyage, we do go around and make
7 rounds of the lashing gear to make sure that they
8 maintain that tension, especially in preparation for
9 heavy weather. They are typically double-checked.

10 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. Are there any
11 questions on that answer? Anybody have any follow-on
12 questions for that particular -- no? Okay.

13 You mentioned that the crew goes around or
14 you go around -- when you say "you," you're talking
15 about the crew will go around?

16 CAPT. STITH: Yes, sir.

17 MR. KUCHARSKI: Who would that particularly
18 be and do you have specific assignments per hold or per
19 area? One person is responsible for a certain area?
20 And then, how is that coordinated?

21 CAPT. STITH: During the loading or the
22 discharge of the vessel, the Mate on watch is in the
23 hold monitoring and recording the cargo that's loaded
24 and monitoring the application of the lashing gear.
25 When we get underway, the bosun and the two day men,

1 day-workers, able-bodied seamen, are usually assigned
2 to go through the second deck, through cargoes, pick up
3 any loose lashing gear and check lashing gear. That
4 was the standard practice on the El Faro.

5 Typically, the ship departed at night. So,
6 the next day, the next morning, that was their first
7 job of the day as a standard practice. They would go
8 through the cargo holds, look for loose lashings, pick
9 up loose lashings, and make adjustments as needed, the
10 bosun and the two ABs, day-workers.

11 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. So, there were no
12 specific assignments per hold? It was just --

13 CAPT. STITH: No, not per hold.

14 MR. KUCHARSKI: Questions?

15 (No response.)

16 I don't think, or maybe I missed it -- when
17 you said the ship sails, could you walk us through the
18 schedule of the vessel typically? If you remember the
19 El Faro, that would be helpful.

20 CAPT. STITH: The ships, both the El Yunque
21 and the El Faro, are typically on a one-week rotation,
22 a one-week schedule, to be in port on a particular day,
23 typically a Monday or a Friday, from what I remember,
24 and then, basically, return to that same port, either
25 Jacksonville or San Juan, the following week at the

1 same time.

2 The schedules are sent to us from shore-side
3 personnel, basically, the port captains or from
4 SeaStar, at the time SeaStar Lines, making us aware of
5 what the schedule for the month would be, so we could
6 plan our arrivals and departures appropriately.

7 MR. O'DONNELL: So, it was on a weekly
8 round-trip?

9 CAPT. STITH: Yes, weekly round-trip, San
10 Juan, Puerto Rico, to Jacksonville, Florida. And
11 typically, the vessel would be at the dock for anywhere
12 from, typically, 16 to 24-26 hours, cargo.

13 I remember more recently, because I was on
14 the El Yunque, we would be at the dock typically at
15 2000, and we would depart the dock the following day at
16 2000. I believe the El Faro had a similar schedule.

17 MR. KUCHARSKI: You mentioned that you went
18 on -- well, let me stop.

19 Any follow-on questions there? Matt?

20 MR. [REDACTED] I do have one follow-on
21 question regarding the --

22 MR. KUCHARSKI: And you are?

23 MR. [REDACTED] [REDACTED] with the Coast
24 Guard.

25 Regarding the route and the cargo, is there

1 any difference between weights going northbound or
2 southbound, or is it pretty well consistent each
3 direction?

4 CAPT. STITH: Typically, I remember more
5 specifically of the El Yunque, the El Yunque would
6 typically take a large number of empty containers from
7 San Juan to Jacksonville. We would be departing on a
8 Monday, which meant no cargo had arrived over the
9 weekend because nobody works on the weekend. So,
10 typically, it would be empty containers going to
11 Jacksonville, anywhere from six reefer containers to
12 25, typically, reefer containers. Going southbound,
13 you would have a considerable larger load of reefer
14 containers, as many as 250 containers as an average on
15 deck or in the cargo hold. And typically, more cargo
16 would be southbound. So, the vessel would have a
17 deeper draft or have more deadweight going southbound
18 than northbound.

19 MR. KUCHARSKI: Jon?

20 MR. FURUKAWA: You mentioned --

21 MR. KUCHARSKI: Would you identify yourself,
22 please?

23 MR. FURUKAWA: Yes. Jon Furukawa, NTSB.

24 You mentioned something about SeaStar

25 Lines --

1 CAPT. STITH: Yes.

2 MR. FURUKAWA: -- for schedules. Can you
3 expand on that?

4 CAPT. STITH: Right now, the ship -- at that
5 time, the ship was managed by TOTE Services,
6 Incorporated. That operating company is going through
7 a restructuring and renaming. I actually don't have
8 the full details because it's ongoing.

9 But, at that time, they were operating the
10 ship for the shipowner, which was SeaStar Lines. I
11 believe now that everything is called TOTE Maritime for
12 the El Faro and the El Yunque.

13 MR. KUCHARSKI: And who would we ask
14 specifically? Understand, so we know who's actually
15 managing the ship, and who would you recommend we ask?

16 CAPT. STITH: I'm going to have to think
17 about that for a minute, just to figure it out.

18 It's in such a period of transition, I am
19 not even sure. Somebody in the Operations Department,
20 most likely, somebody like Patty Finsterbusch.

21 MR. KUCHARSKI: We'll follow up then with
22 TOTE on that.

23 You were Chief Mate on the El Faro, and
24 then, you went to the El Yunque as Master. Did someone
25 leave the company or was there a promotion? Why was

1 there a promotion?

2 CAPT. STITH: Along with the transition from
3 TOTE Services and SeaStar to TOTE Maritime, they were
4 preparing to bring more people into the company to get
5 more familiar with the route and the personnel involved
6 with the cargo operations for the pending arrival of
7 two new vessels to the route.

8 So, basically, as I understand it from the
9 Human Resources Department, that my assignment to the
10 El Faro and the El Yunque was basically an on-the-job
11 interview to evaluate my performance both as a Chief
12 Mate and as a Master, and as basically interviewing for
13 not maintaining one of those positions, but possibly
14 another position on another vessel.

15 That's really all I can speak to as far as
16 that situation.

17 MR. KUCHARSKI: So, you're unaware of
18 anybody leaving the company? This is just an expansion
19 kind of thing?

20 CAPT. STITH: Yes.

21 MR. KUCHARSKI: Any followup questions?

22 MS. BELL: I have a question. This is
23 Carrie Bell from Human Performance Group.

24 You mentioned an on-the-job interview. Can
25 you expand on that a little bit?

1 CAPT. STITH: Just you may use another term,
2 probationary period. Basically, something for the
3 company to evaluate my performance, you know,
4 basically, prove myself. They have my resume. They
5 know me from other vessels, from government service,
6 and from working as a port engineer. But to have the
7 port captains and the owners of the vessel see the way
8 I handle a commercial vessel as a Chief Mate and as a
9 Captain.

10 MS. BELL: Was that just a one-transit-type
11 interview or --

12 CAPT. STITH: I was under the impression
13 that it would be until they made a decision. So, I was
14 prepared to continue as Master or I am prepared to
15 continue as Master of the El Yunque until they tell me
16 otherwise.

17 MS. BELL: Thank you.

18 MR. FURUKAWA: Jon Furukawa, NTSB.

19 So, you said that they were going to expand
20 the line of service. So, they're going to go from two
21 ships to four ships?

22 CAPT. STITH: They are bringing two new
23 ships into service. I am not aware of what the actual
24 plan for the El Yunque and the El Faro was to be. It
25 was my understanding that the El Faro would stay in

1 service on this run until the first vessel, Marlin-
2 class vessel, arrived and was proven.

3 And when I was on the El Faro, I was told by
4 not only the Captain, but operations personnel -- and I
5 can't remember exactly -- to operate the ship as if it
6 was going to run indefinitely, to maintain, to
7 requisition, to make orders, do maintenance as if it
8 was going to run for another 20 years.

9 MR. FURUKAWA: Thank you.

10 CAPT. STITH: Yes.

11 MR. KUCHARSKI: And who was the Captain at
12 the time on the El Faro when you were Mate on there?

13 CAPT. STITH: I had two Captains, Mr. Ray
14 Thompson for approximately three days, and then,
15 Captain Mike Davidson for the remainder, three-and-a-
16 half weeks.

17 MR. KUCHARSKI: Can you tell us briefly what
18 the Q-M-E-D, QMED position is and if they're watch
19 standers?

20 CAPT. STITH: Onboard these vessels, the El
21 Faro and the El Yunque, the QMED primarily performs as
22 an electrician. He has all the abilities and
23 requirements of the QMED, but his primary duty is to
24 maintain the refrigerated containers and deal with other
25 electrical issues as they come up. Typically, since we

1 do carry a lot of refrigerated containers, that does
2 consume the majority of his working hours. He also
3 makes rounds inspecting the refrigerated containers, I
4 believe three rounds per day. If we have what's called
5 a special cargo that has to be monitored more closely,
6 there is another additional round that's made during
7 the night. So, the QMED's primary duties usually end
8 up being the refrigerated containers.

9 MR. KUCHARSKI: And the QMED is Q-M-E-D, is
10 it?

11 CAPT. STITH: Yes.

12 MR. KUCHARSKI: Do you know what that stands
13 for?

14 CAPT. STITH: Qualified Member of the
15 Electrical -- or Engine Department.

16 MR. KUCHARSKI: Thank you.

17 Any questions here?

18 (No response.)

19 Did you also have a position onboard called
20 an oiler?

21 CAPT. STITH: The billet is OMU or Oiler
22 Maintenance Utility. So, there was three of those
23 billets, three individuals. They stood in engineering
24 watch along with an assistant engineer.

25 MR. KUCHARSKI: While you were on the E1

1 Yunque, the El Faro as Chief Officer, and on the El
2 Yunque as Master, were you aware of any propulsion
3 problems that the vessels had?

4 CAPT. STITH: I would not say that there
5 were any problems. In my experience, 20 years of
6 sailing experience, I've only been on one diesel-
7 propelled ship. All the other ships have been steam
8 plants. And I think that these two ships should be
9 very proud that these were the best to maintain steam
10 plants that I've seen in my 20 years. So, I had high
11 confidence and high regard for their operation and
12 maintenance of the engine plants.

13 MR. KUCHARSKI: Let me separate the
14 question.

15 CAPT. STITH: Sure.

16 MR. KUCHARSKI: Propulsion as opposed to
17 losing the plant, losing, blacking out, can you not
18 have a situation where you're not blacked out, the
19 boilers are operating, but the propulsion is not
20 operating? You're not actually getting power to the
21 propellers?

22 CAPT. STITH: I'm sorry, you're going to
23 have to repeat that.

24 MR. KUCHARSKI: The boilers of the ship are
25 producing steam, are they?

1 CAPT. STITH: Uh-hum, yes.

2 MR. KUCHARSKI: To generators to provide --

3 CAPT. STITH: Electrical power.

4 MR. KUCHARSKI: -- electrical power and,

5 also --

6 CAPT. STITH: Turn the steam turbines.

7 MR. KUCHARSKI: Steam turbines, which

8 then --

9 CAPT. STITH: Turn the shaft.

10 MR. KUCHARSKI: Turn the shaft. Okay.

11 CAPT. STITH: And turn the propeller.

12 MR. KUCHARSKI: So, are you aware of anytime
13 where they still had the boilers operating, still had
14 electricity, but you weren't getting propulsion?

15 CAPT. STITH: No, I'm not aware of any of
16 those, any of those issues.

17 MR. KUCHARSKI: Any questions here?

18 (No response.)

19 Maybe you could walk us through the
20 communications on the vessel a little bit, starting
21 with, as Master, did you communicate verbally ship and
22 shore when the ship was in port? And then, out at sea,
23 how the communications flow went?

24 CAPT. STITH: Yes. We've got quite a few
25 means of communications onboard the vessel. In port

1 it's typically cell phone and email. Typically, each
2 Captain, each Chief Engineer has a company-provided
3 cell phone. In addition, they usually use their own
4 cell phones. So, the Chief and the Captain typically
5 have two cell phones. The email service, you know,
6 email on the bridge, the Master's computer, the Chief
7 Engineer, the First Engineer. And on the El Faro they
8 had another computer for the crew who could send and
9 receive emails. So, one computer served the crew while
10 each of the top four billets and the bridge had their
11 own computer. The Chief Mate also had email access.

12 The email system, basically, all emails go
13 to a server onboard the ship. The server then queues
14 the email to be sent out over the satellite system.
15 The Master has the ability to initiate the sending and
16 receiving of emails through the satellite through a
17 program, a software program, on the server.

18 So, the Master typically sends and receives
19 emails as needed, but the email server will still send
20 and receive on a predetermined schedule at least every
21 six hours. That's not only to make sure that emails
22 are transmitted, but also to replicate the files for
23 the maintenance system and the requisitioning system
24 called AMOS. The AMOS program replicates files, I
25 believe once a day, back to the home office, so that

1 requisitions and orders are made in a timely manner.

2 The bridge sends various emails not only
3 onboard, but to make weather reports, position reports,
4 things of that nature, arrival and departure messages.

5 The email system is strictly set up to go
6 over the satellite, through the satellite system, which
7 is provided through Inmarsat, the globe email system.
8 So, there's no other means to get emails out. There's
9 no other cellular delivery device, no gateway, no
10 modem, no landline.

11 Once the ship is underway and out of cell
12 phone range, the main communication means is through
13 the satellite system, through email. Onboard both the
14 El Faro and the El Yunque they actually have two
15 separate satellite systems. They have the main
16 Inmarsat system which is your primary voice, fax, and
17 email system. They also have another satellite system
18 called the mini-M which is primarily used for voice
19 communications in the event, for whatever reason,
20 Inmarsat is not available.

21 Aside from that, through the GMDSS, Global
22 Maritime Distress Safety and Signaling System, they
23 have a separate SAT-C satellite communications system
24 that delivers and receives satellite messages. We can
25 also send emails through that system.

1 Our SSAS, the Ship Security Alert System,
2 operates through that SAT-C system. In addition to
3 that, we have everything that's required by Flag State
4 and AVS. That's MF, HF frequency, medium and high-
5 frequency calling radio, single side band, VHF calling.
6 That ship had, I would like to say, not only the two
7 VHFs that were required by DSE VHFs that acquired
8 through GMDSS, but they also had two other VHFs for
9 operational purposes.

10 The ship had AIS, which is Automatic
11 Identification System; the LRIT, which is the Long
12 Range Identification and Tracking System. They also
13 the other piece of equipment that's required through
14 GMDSS, which is the NBDP, Narrow Band Direct Printing,
15 which is basically another means of a radio frequency
16 messaging that would be similar to a telex, but you
17 would have to radio message another ship and type in
18 the message instead of using a handset to communicate
19 over the radio waves.

20 I think that's about it for communications.
21 The only other means of communications were emergency
22 communications which were the EPIRB, the GMDSS, VHFs,
23 which there were three of those. They were on the
24 bridge. The EPIRB, the Emergency Position indicating
25 radio beacon was mounted on the exterior of the house,

1 the wheelhouse. I think that's about it.

2 MR. KUCHARSKI: You mentioned the EPIRB; it
3 was on the exterior of the wheelhouse. Where exactly
4 was it on the exterior of the wheelhouse?

5 CAPT. STITH: If I remember correctly, it
6 was on the starboard outboard facing the bulkhead. The
7 GMDSS backup batteries, the 24-volt battery bank was in
8 a similar location, if I remember correctly.

9 MR. KUCHARSKI: So, it was mounted on the
10 exterior of the wheelhouse? It would float free --

11 CAPT. STITH: Yes.

12 MR. KUCHARSKI: -- without any overhang or
13 anything.

14 CAPT. STITH: It was a position just, it was
15 aft of the main mast and outboard from the stack, had
16 no obstructions above it whatsoever.

17 MR. KUCHARSKI: You mentioned this GMDSS
18 system and the validity equipment. Is there a quick
19 way to notify authorities in an emergency on utilizing
20 that system? Can you walk us through the different
21 possibilities if you needed to quickly release May Day
22 or an SOS-type message?

23 CAPT. STITH: Yes. That will be no problem.
24 For the VHF's, there's a couple of ways, aside from
25 picking up the handset and making a May Day or a

1 security call on the radio. There's a distress button
2 on those two GMDSS VHF's. Basically, you flip the cover
3 up and you press and hold the button to send a distress
4 message.

5 The same thing for the Ship Security Alert
6 System. It's basically just pressing a button.

7 On the SAT-C, you can also send a distress
8 message, basically, move a cursor to a dropdown menu
9 and select a stress. And it's just go through a couple
10 of menus to select different types, maybe entering your
11 position, your information, and hit Send. So, that
12 it's relatively user-friendly. Every GMDSS console has
13 a flowchart. It's required to be there and it goes
14 through the procedure to send distress messages. So, I
15 think that about covers it.

16 MR. KUCHARSKI: The primary or what I think
17 you called the satellite system, which was the
18 Inmarsat --

19 CAPT. STITH: Yes.

20 MR. KUCHARSKI: -- satellite, a system where
21 you had your emails go through, you said you had voice
22 communication on there, too?

23 CAPT. STITH: Yes, also.

24 MR. KUCHARSKI: Do you have telex, telex
25 communication and fax?

1 CAPT. STITH: Mainly, the telex was handled
2 through the GMDSS SAT-C.

3 MR. KUCHARSKI: Did that have a button on it
4 or anything that you could press in an emergency for --

5 CAPT. STITH: With a SAT-C, you have to go
6 through the dropdown menus and select a stress, from
7 what I recall.

8 MR. KUCHARSKI: You mentioned MF. Can you
9 explain what that is? And is there also a way of
10 transmitting on that?

11 CAPT. STITH: Yes, Medium-frequency/high-
12 frequency radio transmission. Basically, it's a means
13 to transmit basically voice for typewritten messaging
14 on 2 megahertz, 4 megahertz, 6, 8, 12, 22, and 24
15 megahertz radio frequencies, either simplex or duplex,
16 meaning you transmit either on -- on simplex, you
17 transmit and receive on the same frequency, or duplex,
18 you transmit on one and receive on the other, a
19 separate frequency.

20 You can send, try and make a call, a
21 distress call using one of those frequencies.
22 Typically, those radio frequencies go longer distances.
23 So, there's basically a transceiver that will transmit
24 and receive the radio signals. There's a separate unit
25 that operates as a controller where you can, by pushing

1 a button, select a distress message. And you can
2 select, go through just a quick menus and set up what
3 frequencies you want to use, the type of message that
4 you want to send, or if you want to send it to a
5 particular vessel.

6 So, it's basically a keypad controller that
7 will send that message out over either a medium-
8 frequency or a high-frequency radio transmission.

9 MR. KUCHARSKI: Well, is there not something
10 quick if in an emergency you could just very quickly,
11 without going through a keypad? Is there some way of
12 notifying an authority of a distress-type situation?

13 CAPT. STITH: Other than the buttons on the
14 SSAS and the VHF DSEs, that keypad is set up so it's
15 only two or three steps by selecting distress and,
16 then, type of message, you know, "Sinking," "Fire,"
17 whatnot. You know, should transmit the ship's position
18 and ID.

19 MR. [REDACTED] And you might be going to ask
20 -- [REDACTED] Coast Guard --

21 CAPT. STITH: Uh-hum.

22 MR. [REDACTED] Did the ship participate in
23 the Amber System?

24 CAPT. STITH: Yes. Yes.

25 MR. [REDACTED] Which is the Coast Guard's

1 automatic vessel emergency response system.

2 Thank you.

3 CAPT. STITH: Yes.

4 MR. [REDACTED] And it was at the time,
5 correct?

6 CAPT. STITH: Yes. It's gone now, I guess.

7 MR. FURUKAWA: Jon Furukawa, NTSB.

8 You might have said this, but I didn't hear
9 it. What would be your first preference as a Master to
10 sign an emergency?

11 CAPT. STITH: If available, my first choice
12 would be to pick up the Marsat telephone and make a
13 call. I think with that type of method it's nearly
14 instantaneous and you get positive results or negative
15 results, you know. So, from there, you basically go
16 down a chain and go to the next maybe more efficient
17 means.

18 And if you see -- it depends on the
19 situations. The VHF's are only line-of-sight. So,
20 basically, anything in your area. If you don't believe
21 anything is in your area, that might be your last
22 choice.

23 So, to answer your question, I think I would
24 try and go to satellite phone call and, then, go from
25 there.

1 MR. FURUKAWA: Thank you.

2 MR. YOUNG: It's Brian Young with the NTSB.
3 What is the location of the Marsat phone
4 set?

5 CAPT. STITH: So, the actual unit is in the
6 wheelhouse itself. On that ship, it was mounted on the
7 starboard side, just forward of the GMDSS console.
8 That's where all the wiring and antennas just go
9 through as a matter of convenience.

10 The Chief Engineer, the Master, and the
11 bridge all had a handset for a telephone to answer or
12 make any calls.

13 MR. YOUNG: So, there are three locations
14 that could call out?

15 CAPT. STITH: Yes.

16 MR. YOUNG: Using the same line or they have
17 dedicated phone lines?

18 CAPT. STITH: I believe I probably couldn't
19 even say. In my experience, nobody other than the
20 Master used -- and I can't remember the exact
21 structure.

22 MR. YOUNG: And if you were to use the
23 Marsat phone for a distress call, who would you call
24 and who would be available to answer your question?

25 CAPT. STITH: The company has a dedicated

1 emergency response phone number that's manned 24 hours
2 a day by a service. They have a specific protocol set
3 up that, once that service is contacted, the emergency
4 response team is notified and they get together and
5 start taking action. That would be the number that I
6 would call.

7 MR. KUCHARSKI: I'm sorry -- did you --

8 MR. YOUNG: That's all right.

9 MR. KUCHARSKI: So, you would call the
10 company before you would call the Coast Guard or a
11 rescue --

12 CAPT. STITH: Yes.

13 MR. KUCHARSKI: -- in a distress situation?

14 CAPT. STITH: Obviously, every situation is
15 different, but in my mind I would think that, if I make
16 that immediate call to the emergency response telephone
17 number, tell them quickly what was going on, I could
18 get back to handling the situation.

19 They, as a resource, could make
20 notifications to the Coast Guard National Response
21 Center or whatever is needed. Because instead of me
22 trying to make the phone calls, they've got 10 people
23 that can handle 10 different phone calls at once. That
24 would be my thinking.

25 MR. KUCHARSKI: Do you recollect if there is

1 a procedure in the Safety Management System?

2 CAPT. STITH: Yes.

3 MR. KUCHARSKI: There is? Okay.

4 MS. BELL: I have a followup question on
5 that. This is Carrie Bell, NTSB.

6 You said that you would call the company
7 first, and then, they would be responsible for
8 contacting the Coast Guard or whoever. Would you make
9 that decision as to whether they should contact the
10 Coast Guard or do they make that decision themselves?

11 CAPT. STITH: I would probably say that I
12 think we need to call the Coast Guard or whoever I
13 thought, or we need salvage tugs out here or I need a
14 tug, or, you know, we need a helicopter. I would
15 probably make a recommendation and let them make those
16 decisions from that point, you know.

17 MR. FURUKAWA: Jon Furukawa, NTSB.

18 Who at the company would get that phone call
19 from the Inmarsat?

20 CAPT. STITH: So, typically, the phone
21 number is manned by a service, not TOTE Services. So,
22 the answering service, as I understand it, sends out
23 basically a text message to the people on the emergency
24 response team. And basically, whoever gets to the
25 message first calls back in and say, "Hey, what's going

1 on?", and goes from there. They typically assemble in
2 a conference room at TOTE, depending on where they're,
3 the time of day, those types of things.

4 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. Do you know who's the
5 head of the emergency response team for TOTE or who the
6 members are?

7 CAPT. STITH: I can't remember everybody off
8 the top of my head, but John Lawrence, who is the
9 DPA/CSO, and I believe there's a couple of other
10 operations and Directors of Ship Management in there,
11 but I can't remember everybody right now.

12 MR. FURUKAWA: Thank you.

13 MR. [REDACTED] [REDACTED] with the U.S. Coast
14 Guard.

15 Who else onboard would have communication
16 responsibility? For example, if you're doing the
17 Inmarsat, who would be manning VHF FM radios or who
18 else would be making any type of attempts to
19 communicate outside of the Master?

20 CAPT. STITH: Any of the watch officers, you
21 know, the Chief Mate, the Second Mate, the Third Mate.
22 Typically, if there was an emergency situation, it
23 would be whoever the Mate on watch was. I would think
24 that the Chief Mate would be responding to any
25 situations and one of the other Mates would be on the

1 bridge, if they were available.

2 And they are all well-versed and well-
3 trained in all those methods. They would send the
4 Amber messages over the SAT-C, and they were very
5 familiar with the GMDSS system.

6 MR. [REDACTED] So, the bridge watch would have
7 been --

8 CAPT. STITH: Yes.

9 MR. [REDACTED] -- attempting to communicate?

10 CAPT. STITH: Yes.

11 MR. YOUNG: Brian Young with the NTSB.

12 During your time on El Faro or El Yunque,
13 did you ever have an opportunity to test that emergency
14 response number or system? Or did you drill or --

15 CAPT. STITH: Not in my time there. We did
16 -- while I was on the El Faro, we did a QI drill,
17 Qualified Individual drill, in conjunction with or
18 quarterly oil spill HAZMAT spill drill, where the
19 master did contact the QI who was -- I believe he
20 called John Lawrence. So, I believe they've tested.

21 MR. YOUNG: Thank you.

22 MR. KUCHARSKI: Did you also have an iridium
23 cell phones on there as part of --

24 CAPT. STITH: No, sir.

25 MR. KUCHARSKI: Shifting gears back towards

1 a little bit the cargo system and the vessel itself,
2 the physical hull itself, are there watertight closures
3 that are made, and where are they made, what deck or
4 decks? And could you describe them to us?

5 CAPT. STITH: Yes. Leading to both the
6 third deck and the fourth deck, there are watertight
7 doors that are openings, watertight openings that are
8 made to drive cargo through, approximately 20-feet
9 wide, approximately 20-feet tall. And they are
10 hydraulically-actuated and dogged. So, those
11 watertight doors that lead down to those decks, they're
12 also the watertight openings for personnel access, the
13 scuttles or manholes that have a manually-actuated
14 dogging device, a handwheel and dogs that secure those
15 into place. From my memory, those are the only
16 methods, the only means for watertight securing.

17 MR. KUCHARSKI: And where are these scuttles
18 physically located?

19 CAPT. STITH: The manholes, the scuttles,
20 the watertight patches are located on the second deck,
21 which is the deck below the main deck or the weather
22 deck, and they lead down through the third deck to the
23 fourth deck.

24 MR. KUCHARSKI: So, is the main deck on the
25 watertight deck on there or --

1 CAPT. STITH: No.

2 MR. KUCHARSKI: -- which deck is the
3 watertight deck?

4 CAPT. STITH: The second deck would be the
5 watertight deck.

6 MR. KUCHARSKI: While you were Master and
7 Mate, could you tell us what the policy is for opening
8 and closing them?

9 CAPT. STITH: The policy or more procedure,
10 standard operating practice would be that, after the
11 ship arrives, the Mate on watch would go around and
12 what we call crack the doors, the watertight doors, and
13 open up the manholes, and start the cargo hold fans.
14 For row/row operations, it is very hard to open or
15 operate the watertight doors, cargo doors, with the
16 fans operating because of pressures and back-pressures
17 in the cargo holds.

18 So, they always try and crack the doors
19 before they start the fans. So, typically, the Mate on
20 watch would go down, open up the manholes or scuttles,
21 crack the watertight doors if cargo was not preventing
22 them from remaining closed, and then, start the cargo
23 hold fans on high.

24 And then, during the unloading of the ship,
25 the cargo holds, shore-side personnel would make

1 requests to the Mate on watch to open up particular
2 doors fully as cargo was discharged. They would come
3 on the radio and say, "Can you open up B3?" or, you
4 know, whatever the situation may be.

5 Now the reverse would happen as cargo was
6 loaded. As soon as that ramp had been finished or that
7 cargo hold had been finished, the Mate on watch would
8 secure the door, basically, turn on the pump, operate
9 the door closed, make sure the dogs dogged, and then,
10 come up through the manhole.

11 After all the railroad car was loaded and
12 all the doors secured, like I stated before, after
13 departure, the deck gang, the bosun and the ABs would
14 make a round on that second deck and make sure that the
15 hatches were closed, the manholes, the scuttles were
16 closed.

17 MR. KUCHARSKI: So, this was done before the
18 ship put to sea or shortly after?

19 CAPT. STITH: Yes. Yes. Typically, after
20 cargo is done or en route out to the pilot demarcation
21 point.

22 MR. KUCHARSKI: So, on the following day
23 where the Mate and the Bosun and the QMED -- I'm sorry
24 -- the deck --

25 CAPT. STITH: The AB day-workers.

1 MR. KUCHARSKI: -- AB day-workers, how did
2 they get back into that hold then to make sure that the
3 cargo lashings were --

4 CAPT. STITH: So, every day the Chief Mate
5 makes round of the cargo holds where he opens up those
6 manholes, those scuttles; goes down; inspects the
7 cargoes, and comes back up and resecurers it.

8 There's a sign next to each one of those
9 scuttles. One side of the sign says, "Personnel," I
10 want to say "in the hold," or the other sign I believe
11 says, "Secured," something to that nature. I wanted to
12 say they're painted red and white.

13 And if you open up one of the scuttles and
14 you go down and you flip the sign to let everybody know
15 that, hey, somebody's in there, you know, don't close
16 the hatch on me -- the hatches, those scuttle hatches
17 are actually quite heavy. And if you try to climb up
18 and try to open the hatch from the bottom, it's very,
19 very difficult. So, that's why we put the signs there.

20 So, the Mate will go down, make his
21 inspection, come back up, and close that scuttle hatch.
22 The same thing if anybody else goes down to do work,
23 make inspections, or clean, or whatever the case may
24 be, they'll go through the same procedure.

25 MR. KUCHARSKI: Will they ever open the big

1 doors going from one hold to the other?

2 CAPT. STITH: Not typically. Not typically.
3 Typically, cargo just inherently prevents that from
4 happening.

5 MR. KUCHARSKI: Was there a way from No. 3
6 hold to go in through the top through the scuttle, and
7 then, not go back through that scuttle to exit No. 3
8 hold?

9 CAPT. STITH: There are scuttles on both
10 sides of the ship, both sides of the cargo holds. So,
11 you can access that hold through either side and come
12 out through either side. So, if you did go through one
13 side and came out through the other side, that would be
14 possible.

15 MR. KUCHARSKI: And can you go into the
16 engine room specifically from No. 3 or through a
17 watertight door into the engine room?

18 CAPT. STITH: From the No. 3 hold, from my
19 memory, I would say, no, I don't think there are any
20 doors that lead into the engine room from that cargo
21 hold, from No. 3. I can't -- I don't remember any.

22 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. So, we see that we
23 don't have the plan of the ship. What's after No. 3
24 hold? Is that the engine?

25 CAPT. STITH: Yes.

1 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. And then, after the
2 engine room, what hold is there?

3 CAPT. STITH: They call it by different
4 names. I believe they use No. 5 hold as the name.

5 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. So we're just sort of
6 clear on this, and I guess clear in my mind, when you
7 go down through the scuttle into No. 3 hold, the only
8 way to come back out of No. 3 hold is to go back
9 through that scuttle or the one on the other side of
10 the ship?

11 CAPT. STITH: From my memory, yes.

12 MR. KUCHARSKI: Questions there?

13 MR. YOUNG: Brian Young with the NTSB.

14 Are there any indicators on the bridge
15 showing the status of any of these watertight doors or
16 scuttles?

17 CAPT. STITH: Not on the bridge. In what we
18 call, I guess, the sprinkler room or fire control room,
19 there is a status board of indicator lights for the
20 cargo watertight doors.

21 MR. YOUNG: Okay. How many cargo watertight
22 doors are there?

23 CAPT. STITH: I can't remember the exact
24 number --

25 MR. YOUNG: Okay.

1 CAPT. STITH: -- of the top of my head right
2 now.

3 MR. YOUNG: And would the ship ever put to
4 sea with any of these cargo watertight doors open?

5 CAPT. STITH: No, never.

6 MR. YOUNG: Okay.

7 CAPT. STITH: Not in my experience.

8 MR. YOUNG: Okay. thank you.

9 MR. [REDACTED] Coast Guard.

10 A followup: would that information with the
11 El Faro's VDR typically with the status of watertight
12 doors be recorded in the VDR?

13 CAPT. STITH: I don't think so. The only
14 indicator would be in that fire control room, and
15 that's just a status panel, not related to bridge
16 equipment.

17 MR. FURUKAWA: Jon Furukawa, NTSB.
18 The staff's fire control room, is that
19 manned?

20 CAPT. STITH: No. It's on the main deck in
21 a passageway leading to the second deck. And it's a
22 high traffic area, and typically, as Chief Mate what I
23 would do was, after the Mate on watch told me that all
24 watertight doors were secured, I would go to the panel
25 and double-check. And if one wasn't, I would check to

1 see if the lightbulb was out. And then, if that wasn't
2 the case, I would go see if there was an issue with the
3 door.

4 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. Did you ever find any
5 issues with the doors --

6 CAPT. STITH: No.

7 MR. FURUKAWA: -- in that panel?

8 CAPT. STITH: No.

9 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. And for the manholes,
10 the scuttles, you say a different part, different
11 sides. Is that port and starboard or --

12 CAPT. STITH: Yes, it's port and starboard.

13 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay.

14 MS. BELL: Carrie Bell, NTSB.

15 Just to clarify, the indicators, is that
16 something that you -- the water vapor indicators are
17 something you do or do not check before your depart?

18 CAPT. STITH: Yes, we check them.

19 MS. BELL: Okay.

20 CAPT. STITH: Yes.

21 MR. KUCHARSKI: Is there a watertight door
22 on the after section of the ship that goes down after
23 steering, on the second deck?

24 CAPT. STITH: I'll have to think first, so I
25 can try to picture in my mind. The door that leads

1 into the after-steering comes from the deck below that,
2 the deck below the second deck. So, to my knowledge,
3 there is nothing leading into after-steering from the
4 second deck. There is a hatch that leads down to that
5 side of the ship, either side of the ship, which then
6 leads into the access to that after-steering, but not
7 directly from the second deck. There's no opening
8 right there.

9 MR. [REDACTED] A quick question. This is
10 [REDACTED] with the Coast Guard.

11 Back to the scuttles between the second deck
12 and the third deck, and between the third and fourth,
13 can you just describe the operating mechanism to open
14 and close those?

15 CAPT. STITH: Basically, it's a quick-acting
16 dogging mechanism, basically, a handwheel approximately
17 12 inches in diameter. You turn the handwheel to the
18 right and the dogs, either three or four dogs engage in
19 recesses in the combing that's there. You turn the
20 wheel to the left and the dogs disengage, and you can
21 then open the hatch, which is on a hinge attached to
22 the combing.

23 MR. [REDACTED] Is there a wheel on each side?

24 CAPT. STITH: Yes, there's a wheel on each
25 side.

1 MR. [REDACTED] [REDACTED] with the Coast Guard.

2 Is there any indicators to indicate if those
3 are open or closed?

4 CAPT. STITH: No, without physically
5 checking the status of the handwheel. If the dogs are
6 engaged and you try and turn the wheel to the right,
7 you won't be able to turn it. So, that will tell you
8 that the dogs are engaged.

9 MR. KUCHARSKI: Do you want to take a quick
10 break here before we continue? Would you like to take
11 a break or do you want --

12 CAPT. STITH: I'm fine.

13 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay.

14 CAPT. STITH: I hope I'm not putting anybody
15 to sleep.

16 MR. KUCHARSKI: Just quickly on the
17 lashings, do you know the chain size on them for the --

18 CAPT. STITH: I wouldn't be able to say.

19 MR. KUCHARSKI: Does the vessel have a
20 riding crew onboard, are you aware of?

21 CAPT. STITH: When I was on the El Faro,
22 they did have a riding crew, some technicians. They
23 were Polish citizens.

24 MR. KUCHARSKI: Do you know what work they
25 were doing?

1 CAPT. STITH: From my understanding, they
2 were making some preparations to the vessel.
3 Basically, in addition to doing minor repairs, they
4 were adding some heating lines, some piping, some
5 electrical wiring for wenchies and equipment that were
6 going to be installed on the vessel, most likely at the
7 next shipyard period.

8 MR. KUCHARSKI: Do they have any need to go
9 into the cargo holds at all or below the second deck?

10 CAPT. STITH: From what I remember, the
11 majority of their work was done on the second deck
12 exclusively. At that time, they were running piping in
13 the overhead of the second deck and wiring along the
14 sides of the bulkheads, putting in controllers and
15 junction boxes.

16 So, while I was there, I believe that they
17 were exclusively working on the second deck, and they
18 were also doing some minor, minor welding repairs for
19 the engine department, you know, fabricating different
20 things.

21 MR. KUCHARSKI: Were there any bilge alarms
22 if you get water into the holds? And can you tell us
23 where the alarms, where the actual sensor was, and
24 then, where the alarm panel was?

25 CAPT. STITH: The cargo hold bilge alarms,

1 each cargo hold in the aft end at the bilge well had a
2 mechanical float, a stainless steel ball that, if there
3 was water or some fluid in that space, it would cause
4 the ball to float. It would close a contact and make
5 an alert in the engine room and notify the engineer on
6 watch that there was something in that space.

7 MR. KUCHARSKI: And what typically happened
8 next after the engineer on watch --

9 CAPT. STITH: They would call the Mate on
10 watch, and the Mate on watch, if they were in port,
11 would go investigate. If they were underway, they
12 would call the Chief Mate, have him investigate and see
13 what was going on. Maybe the flow got jammed up or if
14 there was actually liquid in the space.

15 MR. KUCHARSKI: And if there was liquid in
16 the space, what happened next after investigation?

17 CAPT. STITH: I believe they would try to
18 pump the space and deal with whatever fluid was in
19 there. There was a lot of piping that goes along the
20 bulkheads in the lower holds. So, it could be
21 anything, whatever fluid might be on the ship.

22 MR. KUCHARSKI: So, while you were a Mate,
23 did you ever have to, based on a bilge alarm that went
24 off, did you have to investigate and, then, ask them
25 to --

1 CAPT. STITH: Never. In the month that I
2 was there we never had a bilge alarm go off.

3 MR. KUCHARSKI: Did the El Faro have an
4 emergency squad and duties for the emergency squad?

5 CAPT. STITH: Yes. There were two emergency
6 teams. They were broken up according to the station
7 bill. We did all the drills that we were required to
8 do.

9 So, there were actually two damage control
10 teams, what I call damage control teams or emergency
11 parties or emergency squads, two emergency gear-
12 lockers.

13 MR. KUCHARSKI: Do they specifically have
14 any duties assigned for purely damage control, let's
15 say water intrusion or hole in the ship or something
16 like that?

17 CAPT. STITH: As I remember, the station
18 bill did not call out specifically flooding.
19 Basically, the thinking was they wanted everybody to go
20 to the same emergency station, and then, from there, be
21 notified what the emergency was and bring the
22 appropriate gear to deal with that situation. So, you
23 either went to an abandon-ship scenario or an emergency
24 scenario to maintain a little bit more simplicity and
25 consistency.

1 MR. KUCHARSKI: Was there dewatering
2 equipment besides the bilge pumps taken from the
3 engine?

4 CAPT. STITH: That vessel had served in
5 service under charter to the Military Sealift Command.
6 So, they did have other means to dewater. Primarily
7 from what I remember, they had eductors, portable
8 eductors that would be powered by a fire main through
9 fire hoses. I believe that, aside from rigging some
10 other pump from that engine department, like an air-
11 driven diaphragm off or something, that would be it.

12 MS. BELL: Carrie Bell, NTSB.

13 You mentioned the abandon-ship scenario and
14 the emergency scenario, too. What would an abandon-
15 ship drill look like?

16 CAPT. STITH: The Captain would be on the
17 bridge with a man on watch and the lookout, the ABM
18 watch. They would sound the emergency signal -- or the
19 abandon-ship signal on the ship's whistle and the
20 general alarm, make an announcement on the ship's radio
21 saying that this was a drill. You know, "All hands
22 report to your stations. And repeat: this is a
23 drill."

24 Everybody would go to their assigned
25 locations and at that time take a muster. At that

1 muster, the Boat Commander would report back to the
2 bridge that the muster had been taken and the results
3 of the muster.

4 At that time, the Captain would tell the
5 Boat Commanders to either, you know, depending on the
6 weather situation, lower the boats to the embarkation
7 deck and instruct the crew in their duties, and then,
8 instruct the crew in life-raft-launching procedures.

9 And then, once that was done, you know, the
10 Boat Commander would say, "Okay, the lifeboat is at the
11 embarkation deck," and the Captain would acknowledge
12 that. And he would say, "Okay, return the lifeboat to
13 the stodge position and secured for sea."

14 And so, once that was done, a report back to
15 the Captain that the lifeboat is secured for sea; all
16 crew members have been instructed in their duties, and
17 we've inspected their life jackets and water lights,
18 and we're ready to conclude the drill.

19 MS. BELL: So, did you participate in any of
20 those on El Faro or on El Yunque while you were --

21 CAPT. STITH: Yes.

22 MS. BELL: -- up in here?

23 CAPT. STITH: Yes. I guess three of them.

24 And we also did core-related lifeboat lowering and
25 release test. The port lifeboat was done I believe two

1 weeks before I was there, and then, I did the starboard
2 lifeboat in San Juan, Puerto Rico. So, we lowered the
3 boat.

4 Since the ship always goes starboard side,
5 too, what we do, the process for that is to bring a
6 lifeboat cradle alongside the ship and have it on the
7 dock. We lower the lifeboat to the dock, set it in the
8 cradle, so there's just a little bit of weight on the
9 falls; release the releasing gear to make sure that it
10 operates properly, and then, hook the falls back up,
11 and then, bring it home. So, we did that, that
12 quarterly test while I was there.

13 MS. BELL: So, when new crew members come
14 onboard, how are they trained in knowing what's going
15 to happen when you do these types of drills?

16 CAPT. STITH: There's a familiarization
17 process where new crew members come on. They meet with
18 basically their supervisor and department head. And
19 typically, the department head will familiarize that
20 person with their duties. Then, for safety equipment,
21 typically, the Third Mate will take them and show them
22 their fire emergency equipment, their station, and
23 their duties, and then, also show them their lifeboat
24 and make sure they know what their duty entails and how
25 to do it. That's typically the process. And then,

1 they sign a log acknowledging that they've been
2 indoctrinated.

3 MR. FURUKAWA: Jon Furukawa, NTSB.

4 The lifeboat drill where you actually
5 brought it down, was that for the El Faro or the El
6 Yunque?

7 CAPT. STITH: That was the El Faro.

8 MR. FURUKAWA: El Faro? Okay.

9 For the riding crew, what were their duties
10 during emergency drills and abandon-ship drills?

11 CAPT. STITH: They went and mustered with
12 everybody. I believe that, as supernumeraries, I would
13 like to say I believe that they went to the crew mess,
14 which is adjacent to the main emergency gear locker,
15 and they would be mustered there. And they would be
16 directed to take action as needed from there. So,
17 basically, they go there and muster, wait, and then,
18 you know, afterwards if we do a debrief, or whatever,
19 they would be included in that.

20 MR. FURUKAWA: During boat drill, abandon-
21 ship drill, what were their duties?

22 CAPT. STITH: They were assigned to a
23 lifeboat and they would go to the lifeboat, and I
24 believe their duties was assist as directed.
25 Basically, they would be there to observe and any other

1 assistance.

2 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. When you did the
3 lifeboat drill on the El Faro and you loaded the
4 lifeboat, what were they doing at that time?

5 CAPT. STITH: I believe when we did that,
6 they weren't onboard yet. I can't remember for sure.
7 Since we were in port, they typically don't work in
8 port because cargo operations are going on. So, they
9 may have been working in the engine room or ashore.

10 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. You said that new crew
11 members get familiarization. How about the riding
12 crew?

13 CAPT. STITH: Yes.

14 MR. FURUKAWA: Were they familiarized with
15 emergency --

16 CAPT. STITH: Yes, they also get
17 indoctrinated and familiarized. TOTE has a policy of
18 indoctrinating what they call crew members and non-crew
19 members, basically, people who are signed on in part of
20 the ship's crew or other people. So, they also receive
21 familiarization.

22 MR. FURUKAWA: Are there records kept on
23 that?

24 CAPT. STITH: They were kept onboard. It
25 would just depend on when they were collected and

1 collated, if they were sent to the home office or not.

2 MR. FURUKAWA: Thank you.

3 MR. [REDACTED] Coast Guard.

4 You mention in abandon-ship drills the
5 assignment of various lifeboats. So, what I would you
6 to do for a minute is focus on the life rafts.
7 Generally speaking, where are they located in terms of
8 height above the water?

9 CAPT. STITH: The life rafts on the El Faro
10 were located on the embarkation deck right adjacent to
11 the lifeboat davits, and I believe they were aft, if
12 memory serves me correctly. So, they were -- I can't
13 remember the exact height above the water, but they
14 were on the embarkation deck right where everybody
15 musts for abandon-ship.

16 MR. [REDACTED] And I've just got a technical
17 question for clarification. Can the lifeboat be
18 entered and manned once it's inflated on the deck of
19 the vessel?

20 CAPT. STITH: The life raft?

21 MR. [REDACTED] The life raft, yes.

22 CAPT. STITH: I really can't say. I don't
23 know what that particular size life raft looks like
24 when it's inflated and if there was adequate space.

25 MR. [REDACTED] Okay. So, typically, the life

1 raft would be put overboard --

2 CAPT. STITH: Yes.

3 MR. [REDACTED] -- and a painter would be used
4 to inflate the life raft?

5 CAPT. STITH: Yes. The procedure, as stated
6 on the life raft instructions, which are on the case,
7 the canister that contains the life raft and on the
8 bulkhead adjacent to the life rafts, was for manual
9 release, release the pelican hook which secures the
10 life raft in place, secure the painter to a secure
11 point on the vessel, pull out the sea painter until you
12 have adequate sea painter. Put the canister over the
13 side, and then, give a yank on the sea painter to
14 inflate it and deploy it.

15 MR. [REDACTED] Okay. So, if I'm in the
16 muster point and I'm the riding crew or the Polish
17 riding crew, how, then, do I get in the boat, the life
18 raft?

19 CAPT. STITH: There's typically three
20 methods. There's an embarkation ladder that's
21 maintained underneath the lifeboat. It has a cover on
22 it. So, you would take the cover off, throw the
23 embarkation of the ladder over the side -- it's
24 physically connected to the deck of the ship at that
25 level -- and climb down the ladder. And then, the life

1 raft should be ideally located right next to the
2 ladder. It's all within 5 or 10 feet of each other.
3 Make it from the ladder to the life raft. If the
4 ladder was inaccessible or you didn't have enough time,
5 you would either have to jump in the water or jump on
6 top of the life raft, and then, try and make it in.

7 MR. [REDACTED] And the ship had five rafts?

8 CAPT. STITH: At that time, they did have
9 five life rafts. One was on the bow; the other four
10 back aft.

11 MR. [REDACTED] And just one final question.
12 The embarkation ladder --

13 CAPT. STITH: Yes?

14 MR. [REDACTED] -- how often did you inspect
15 that?

16 CAPT. STITH: That was at a minimum an
17 annual inspection during AVS annuals, Coast Guard
18 annuals.

19 MR. [REDACTED] Thank you.

20 MR. FURUKAWA: Hi. Jon Furukawa again,
21 NTSB.

22 Did you run any fire boat drills while the
23 riding crew was onboard?

24 CAPT. STITH: I believe in my time there, I
25 can't remember the number, but I know that we did at

1 least one while I was there.

2 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. Did the riding crew,
3 did they put on life jackets or survival suits?

4 CAPT. STITH: I can't remember.

5 MR. FURUKAWA: Were the crew at, during the
6 fire boat drill, I guess boat drill, did they put on
7 life jackets or survival suits?

8 CAPT. STITH: Life jackets were required at
9 the drills, and every member, everybody that attended
10 the abandon-ship drills did have life jackets on. They
11 were properly secured, tied at the top and the bottom,
12 and the strap engaged.

13 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. For the
14 familiarization process for the riding crew, who I am
15 assuming are non-mariners, who would instruct them on
16 how to put on a life jacket and --

17 CAPT. STITH: That would be the Third Mate.

18 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. And did they have
19 survival suits assigned to them?

20 CAPT. STITH: Yes.

21 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. And would this Third
22 Mate also --

23 CAPT. STITH: Yes.

24 MR. FURUKAWA: -- how to put on a --

25 CAPT. STITH: Typically, yes.

1 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. Thank you.

2 MR. [REDACTED] [REDACTED] with the Coast
3 Guard.

4 You described for us the deployment process
5 for the life rafts. Can you do the same for the life
6 boats, including the type of lifeboats. Some are fully
7 enclosed; some are open-top; some gravity, you know,
8 automatic from davits. Can you just describe that
9 process for us.

10 CAPT. STITH: The type of lifeboat that was
11 on the El Faro and the El Yunque was an open-type
12 lifeboat, and it's actually a very, very simple
13 process. It can be accomplished under good
14 circumstances relatively quickly. And it involves, No.
15 1, making sure the boat plug is in. No. 2, releasing
16 the gripes, the forward and aft gripes.

17 After that, you clear the stopper bars or
18 the harbor bar from the davit tracks. After that, it's
19 just a matter of lifting up on the handbrake and
20 lowering the lifeboat to the embarkation deck, where
21 you can either board the lifeboat or at that point you
22 release the tricing pendants and lower the boat the
23 rest of the way to the water's edge, and either go down
24 the embarkation ladder or jump over the side and, then,
25 get in. Once it's at the water's edge, you release the

1 Rottmer releasing gear and release the sea painter, and
2 should be able to propel yourself away from the ship.

3 MR. [REDACTED] So, you said that happens
4 relatively quickly in good circumstances. If the
5 vessel is rolling a lot or if there is a permanent
6 list, how does that affect the operation of that
7 equipment?

8 CAPT. STITH: I mean, basically, it would
9 make it more difficult. The tricing pendants, when the
10 lifeboat is alongside at the embarkation deck, are
11 designed to hold the lifeboat against the ship until
12 they are released. So, the lifeboat would be
13 maintained alongside the ship until those tricing
14 pendants were released.

15 After they are released, the lifeboat can be
16 lowered to the water freely, depending on list and
17 depending on what side of the ship. Just as an
18 example, during our core-lifeboat drill, I lowered the
19 boat, the lifeboat, with two other guys, you know, and
20 released it, you know, just me and two other guys. So,
21 it is not a very complicated process, from my
22 standpoint.

23 MR. [REDACTED] Thank you.

24 MR. [REDACTED] [REDACTED] with the Coast Guard.

25 At what point would the sea anchor be

1 deployed on the boat and how would that be deployed?

2 CAPT. STITH: The sea anchor is typically
3 either kept stowed underneath one of the forward-ship
4 benches with a securing line or in one of the
5 compartments in the bulwarks or alongside the hull of
6 the lifeboat. So, someone would have to pull that out
7 or unsecure it from underneath the bench, throw it out
8 off of the stern of the lifeboat and, then, attach it
9 somehow, most likely through a shackle. Shackle it
10 onto the securing point on the aft end of the lifeboat.

11 MR. So, just to be clear, in order
12 for the sea anchor on the lifeboat to be deployed into
13 the waters, you might be in the boat?

14 CAPT. STITH: Not necessarily. I mean,
15 there are a lot of scenarios where it could have been
16 secured prior to the lifeboat being launched, like if
17 it was in the davits.

18 MR. Would that be the normal thing
19 then?

20 CAPT. STITH: No.

21 MR. No?

22 CAPT. STITH: Normally, people would be in
23 the lifeboat and they would put it out after they had
24 gotten away, got away from the ship. Potentially, you
25 probably wouldn't be using your means of propulsion

1 while the sea anchor is rigged. So, typically, people
2 would be in the boat and rig it when the propulsion was
3 off.

4 MR. [REDACTED] Thank you.

5 CAPT. STITH: Yes.

6 MS. BELL: Carrie Bell, NTSB.

7 You mentioned they could jump into the boat
8 from the embarkation deck, correct?

9 CAPT. STITH: Let me --

10 MS. BELL: The life rafts, you were talking
11 about life rafts.

12 CAPT. STITH: Yes, life rafts.

13 MS. BELL: Sorry to go back to life rafts.
14 Just I'm talking about the distance between the
15 embarkation deck and the water. How far is that
16 normally?

17 CAPT. STITH: On that ship, I can't remember
18 exactly. Typically, it might be 30 feet.

19 MS. BELL: So, if you would deploy the life
20 raft and you did not use the embarkation ladder, it
21 would be a 30-foot, something like a 30-foot drop to
22 try to reach the life raft?

23 CAPT. STITH: Yes.

24 MS. BELL: Okay.

25 MR. [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Coast Guard.

1 Just going back to the lifeboats, the
2 propulsion, could you describe how the vessel is
3 propelled?

4 CAPT. STITH: One of the lifeboats had a
5 mechanical means, hand-propelled, what's typically
6 known as Fleming gear where, depending on the number of
7 people in the boat, there's basically four hand
8 locations where you sit on a bench and you push and you
9 pull, and it turns the propeller shaft through a gear.
10 And then, the other lifeboat had a diesel engine with a
11 hydraulic start mechanism.

12 MR. [REDACTED] And that was, the hydraulic
13 start was similar to a foot pedal which had a limited
14 number of starts to start the engine?

15 CAPT. STITH: Yes, basically, a plunger or
16 something with a hydraulic accumulator that would turn
17 the engine over to get it going.

18 MR. [REDACTED] And had Fleming gear in your
19 boat drills, do you remember which boat that was on?

20 CAPT. STITH: I can't remember right at this
21 point. I can't remember which one.

22 MR. [REDACTED] And then, just we mentioned
23 the tricing pendants, and so forth, right?

24 CAPT. STITH: Uh-hum.

25 MR. [REDACTED] If the vessel had established,

1 say, a 15-degree list, as has been reported, could they
2 have launched both the lifeboats?

3 CAPT. STITH: I really can't say. I think
4 there's a lot of variables in the equation, and I can't
5 -- I mean, I can't say.

6 MR. [REDACTED] Okay. Thank you.

7 MR. FURUKAWA: Jon Furukawa, NTSB.

8 You said the vessel had open-type lifeboats.
9 How to phrase this? Are open-type lifeboats common in
10 modern vessels?

11 CAPT. STITH: Interestingly enough, I've
12 also been on -- all my ships have been steam ships. I
13 have had all open lifeboats on the past few ships that
14 I've been on. So, I would have to say that it's still
15 at least half open lifeboats, half enclosed lifeboats
16 in the merchant marine.

17 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. And the steam vessels,
18 do you know what the average age of these vessels?

19 CAPT. STITH: Probably 40 years.

20 MR. FURUKAWA: Forty years? Okay.

21 You said on your vessels; the tankers?

22 CAPT. STITH: The newest ship I've been on
23 probably was built in 1983.

24 MR. FURUKAWA: 1983? And what kind of
25 vessel was that and what kind of lifeboats did it have?

1 CAPT. STITH: It was what's called a
2 combination marine pre-positioning force vessel. It
3 had open lifeboats. It had six.

4 MR. FURUKAWA: All seven lifeboats?

5 CAPT. STITH: Yes.

6 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. Is that steam or
7 diesel?

8 CAPT. STITH: That was a diesel ship.

9 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. Thank you.

10 MR. KUCHARSKI: Bringing this back on track
11 for a second now, so we don't get too far off, just a
12 quick question on -- I only have two more of my own
13 questions, then we'll go around the room. Was there a
14 storm profile for the lashings? In other words, if you
15 put the seating, you wanted extra lashings for the
16 longshoremen to put them on? Did they have a storm
17 profile or heavy-weather profile?

18 CAPT. STITH: I don't remember there being
19 anything like that.

20 MR. KUCHARSKI: You mentioned that you had
21 familiarization for the crew members. Was there any
22 kind of a manual of safety equipment or lifesaving
23 equipment that they could consult?

24 CAPT. STITH: Yes. In each of the lounge
25 areas, the officers' lounge and the crew lounge, there

1 was a SOLAS Lifesaving Manual; also, in the Chief
2 Mate's office and the Chief Engineer's office, and I
3 believe also on the bridge, the SOLAS Lifesaving
4 Manual, with all the ship's equipment and how to
5 properly use that equipment or a description of it was
6 in that.

7 MS. BELL: Carrie Bell, NTSB.

8 Would you say that the crew members would
9 pick that up and read it or is that something that you
10 required them to read or how does that work in terms of
11 training?

12 CAPT. STITH: TOTE has a training schedule
13 with required training, what they call track training.
14 And so, that was one of the required trainings on a
15 quarterly basis, to review the SOLAS Lifesaving Manual
16 with the crew. So, in my time there, I completed that
17 training on a quarterly basis with the crew and
18 reviewed that SOLAS Lifesaving Manual with them. I
19 can't remember exactly when it was in my time there,
20 but I remember doing that.

21 MS. BELL: So, do you have to do it in a
22 certain amount of time from the time you begin
23 employment with the company?

24 CAPT. STITH: Just when you're familiarized,
25 you basically get notified that it's there, if you have

1 questions about how to use flares, lifeboats, life
2 jackets. And then, on a quarterly basis, a review that
3 it's available and this is the information contained in
4 it.

5 MR. KUCHARSKI: Back to one or two more
6 questions. Did you ever handle the El Yunque? You
7 were Master on it. Did you ever handle that ship in
8 greater than a 20-foot sea?

9 CAPT. STITH: No.

10 MR. KUCHARSKI: And my last question, the
11 AIS, did it have a little unit, a standalone type of
12 unit? Did it have a standalone type of unit or how was
13 that actually -- how was the signal broadcast?

14 CAPT. STITH: It had a display and it also
15 fed the radars and went to the S-VDR. So, you could
16 pull up AIS information on the radars or on one of the
17 radars, yes, on the radars, and on a display you could
18 see who else was out there.

19 MR. KUCHARSKI: But the signal was sent
20 independently of the radar itself?

21 CAPT. STITH: Yes. Yes, entirely. It is an
22 independent unit.

23 MR. KUCHARSKI: And the antenna for that
24 was --

25 CAPT. STITH: On the flying bridge.

1 MR. KUCHARSKI: On the flying bridge?

2 CAPT. STITH: Yes. Above the wheelhouse.

3 MR. [REDACTED] And I don't think we covered
4 it. [REDACTED] Coast Guard.

5 In the communications description that you
6 gave, did you receive weather-routing information from
7 like a third-party weather service?

8 CAPT. STITH: The El Faro and the El Yunque
9 do receive weather information, basically, a weather
10 map. We do not receive weather-routing
11 recommendations. So, we receive weather information.

12 Like on a six-hour basis, we'll receive a
13 data file which we load into a program, and it will
14 give a graphical depiction of what that service
15 predicts is going on in the area.

16 MR. [REDACTED] So, basically, you're getting
17 a raw graphic data of weather patterns, hurricanes,
18 tracks, and so forth. How do you use that?

19 CAPT. STITH: I personally -- which I think
20 your question is me personally? --

21 MR. [REDACTED] Yes.

22 CAPT. STITH: -- okay -- use that to
23 evaluate the route and the speed and, basically, how
24 I'm going to undertake the voyage.

25 MR. [REDACTED] Have you been on vessels that

1 received like some kind of contracted third-party
2 weather-routing assistance in your career?

3 CAPT. STITH: Only with the Navy. They tell
4 you where they want you to go.

5 MR. [REDACTED] Okay. So --

6 CAPT. STITH: Commercially, no.

7 MR. [REDACTED] Yes, but that's related to
8 weather, right? The Navy prediction is?

9 CAPT. STITH: They will give you Optimum
10 Track Ship Routing, OTSR, recommendations, yes.

11 MR. [REDACTED] And what will be the purpose
12 of that?

13 CAPT. STITH: There could be a couple of
14 purposes, either weather avoidance or fuel efficiency
15 or basically timing. Basically, they want you some
16 place for a timed arrival.

17 MR. [REDACTED] Okay. Thank you.

18 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. Got the round of
19 questions finally.

20 MR. KYNE: Okay. I've only got two, and
21 they're kind of going way back in time, about three
22 hours ago.

23 So, in your time when you were Chief Mate on
24 El Faro --

25 CAPT. STITH: Yes.

1 MR. KYNE: -- you were Chief Mate and
2 predominantly worked with Captain Davidson?

3 CAPT. STITH: Yes.

4 MR. KYNE: Was he a normally-scheduled
5 Captain on a normal rotation or was he, say, a one-off
6 rotary job?

7 CAPT. STITH: No, he was what they call a
8 permanent Captain, and he was on a rotation.

9 MR. KYNE: And was that rotation 10 weeks on
10 and 10 weeks off?

11 CAPT. STITH: Yes.

12 MR. KYNE: And what was your relationship
13 with the Captain, Captain Davidson, and what was your
14 impression of his ability as Captain?

15 CAPT. STITH: My relationship with Captain
16 Davidson was actually very good. He and I both have
17 very, very high standards and high expectations of the
18 people that we work with. In that manner, I regard him
19 as very, what I would call a true professional and,
20 basically, somebody that said what he was going to do
21 and followed through and was reliable. That was my
22 experience with him.

23 We had a very good working relationship. I
24 think that he saw from the beginning that I had the
25 same type of work ethic and, basically, mindset as he

1 did. So, I would like to think that we got along very
2 well.

3 MR. KYNE: And my last question is, how
4 would you describe his safety culture aboard the ship
5 and how he promoted safety with his crew?

6 CAPT. STITH: He took safety very seriously.
7 He liked to conduct monthly safety meetings in an
8 organized and open manner, very detailed, very much
9 attention to detail when it came to crews issues and
10 addressing those issues and getting things solved in a
11 timely manner. Things with him did not linger. If
12 something came up, it got figured out right away.

13 I think the same for the safety culture.
14 Every time that we would get underway, you know, he
15 made a point of making sure that everybody knew that
16 they needed safety glasses, vests, hard hats. And it
17 was almost to the point where people knew the words
18 that were going to come out of his mouth. So, they
19 knew that it was important to him and that they'd
20 better have it. And if he saw somebody without it, he
21 would let them know. So, in that regard, he set the
22 tone.

23 MR. KYNE: Did he have a permanent relief or
24 was the other Captain a rotary job?

25 CAPT. STITH: I'm not sure, just because of

1 the pending acquisition of the new ships, what his
2 relief schedule was going to be.

3 MR. KYNE: Thank you.

4 MR. [REDACTED] Can I ask a quick followup
5 question to that, not dealing with the Coast Guard.
6 But you mentioned earlier that you sailed as Chief Mate
7 on El Faro for four weeks. Was all four weeks with
8 Captain Davidson or was it split up with the relief?

9 CAPT. STITH: Yes, so when I got there, the
10 previous Chief Mate was filling in as Captain. So, I
11 was there with him for about three or four days, I
12 would like to say. Basically, one trip from Puerto
13 Rico to Jacksonville and, then, Captain Davidson came
14 on.

15 MR. FURUKAWA: Hi. Jon Furukawa, NTSB.

16 These are kind of notes all over the place.
17 Let's see. You sailed for each vessel for about a
18 month, but you spent some time ashore with TOTE or
19 SeaStar Lines?

20 CAPT. STITH: With TOTE Services I was
21 subcontracted as a port engineer for two ships that
22 were in the shipyard.

23 MR. FURUKAWA: So, what's your employment
24 total with TOTE and TOTE-related companies in years?

25 CAPT. STITH: Okay. Yes, I will have to do

1 some quick math. I would say four-and-a-half years.

2 MR. FURUKAWA: Four-and-a-half years? Okay.

3 And how old are you? Your age?

4 CAPT. STITH: I am 41.

5 MR. FURUKAWA: Forty-one? Okay.

6 And let's see. As a Chief Mate, the 48
7 watches, both ships?

8 CAPT. STITH: Yes.

9 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. Second Mate, stood
10 which watches?

11 CAPT. STITH: The 12:00 to 4:00.

12 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. Both ships?

13 CAPT. STITH: Yes.

14 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. And Third Mate?

15 CAPT. STITH: Yes, 8:00 to 12:00.

16 When we would come into port, for cargo
17 operations, the Second Mate and the Third Mate would
18 switch to a six-and-six watch.

19 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay.

20 CAPT. STITH: And the Chief Mate would be
21 available all day long, you know, as needed and within
22 rest-hour periods.

23 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. Let's see, you're
24 saying that somebody told you when you were Chief Mate
25 to maintain the vessels as if it was to remain in

1 service for 20 years. Who said that?

2 CAPT. STITH: I can't remember. I would say
3 maintain the ship indefinitely because they didn't know
4 what the plan would be.

5 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. So, no one said to
6 maintain it for another 20 years? It was just
7 indefinitely?

8 CAPT. STITH: Yes.

9 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. And you don't remember
10 who said that?

11 CAPT. STITH: No.

12 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. Let's see. Going back
13 to the open lifeboats, the vessels 45 years old, did
14 you require to be grandfathered to have open lifeboats?

15 CAPT. STITH: From what I understand, the
16 only Coast Guard requirement was were those lifeboats;
17 no additional lifeboats or other types of lifeboats.

18 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. So, just those
19 lifeboats should not get grandfathered or get a waiver
20 thing?

21 CAPT. STITH: To my knowledge, those
22 lifeboats still have Coast Guard approval.

23 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay.

24 CAPT. STITH: And that includes lifeboats or
25 any other types; we're not required.

1 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. And we asked the
2 Captain about the voyage, the voyage back from San Juan
3 to Fort Lauderdale -- or, I'm sorry -- you know,
4 Jacksonville. You were on that vessel at the same time
5 that the --

6 CAPT. STITH: El Faro?

7 MR. FURUKAWA: -- El Faro was going the
8 other way --

9 CAPT. STITH: Yes. Yes.

10 MR. FURUKAWA: -- for this voyage.

11 Did you have any conversations with Captain
12 Davidson or anybody else on the El --

13 CAPT. STITH: We communicated through email.
14 I believe that I left approximately, I left San Juan
15 about 24 hours before he had left Jacksonville. And I
16 communicated with him through email, just curious on
17 how they were doing. I sent an email to him.

18 And then, as we were in the same vicinity, I
19 spoke on the VHF, the bridge radio, with the Chief Mate
20 who was on watch at the time.

21 Those were the only communications. I think
22 I may have emailed back once or twice with the Captain
23 and, then, the one VHF conversation. And then, once
24 TOTE was not able to have communications with the ship,
25 they requested that I attempt to contact him because I

1 was still underway and the GMDSS equipment, which they
2 didn't have at the office, the SAT-C and the MFHF
3 single-side band.

4 So, I attempted to make calls, DFC calls,
5 Visual Selective Calling, on the VHF and single-side
6 band and SAT-C telex. As time progressed, they asked
7 me to keep trying on an hourly basis, to keep trying to
8 contact them, in the hopes that, if they were not able
9 to send a message back, that at least they were
10 receiving my message, my messages, which requested them
11 to activate their 4-6 megahertz EPIRB, so that their
12 location could be determined.

13 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. About what time period
14 did the office ask you to contact the El Faro?

15 CAPT. STITH: It was in the morning, the day
16 the hurricane, the day that they lost communications
17 with them. I can't remember, without going back to the
18 emails --

19 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay.

20 CAPT. STITH: -- to see what time.

21 MR. FURUKAWA: About how far away do you
22 think you were from the El Faro?

23 CAPT. STITH: I really don't know without
24 having the plot of the positions. I can't say.

25 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. Did you turn back in

1 that direction or continue on to Jacksonville?

2 CAPT. STITH: We continued on to
3 Jacksonville.

4 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. Let's see. You said
5 that you spoke to the Chief Mate on the VHF. When was
6 this? How long was this, your discussion with him?

7 CAPT. STITH: I believe it was in the
8 evening sometime when he was on watch, and I think the
9 conversation lasted about five minutes. And we spoke.
10 He and I are friends. And since I relieved him, I
11 wanted to thank him for everything that he showed me,
12 because we didn't get to speak too much when it was
13 time for him to leave. So, I wanted to thank him for
14 everything that he showed me.

15 He asked me if I was coming back to relieve
16 him, and I told him I didn't know. After that, you
17 know, he seemed in good spirits. We talked about his
18 vacation because I saw pictures of him sailing with his
19 wife, things like that. He asked me if I had any plans
20 for my vacation. I said, you know, "Whatever TOTE has
21 in store for me." So, that was pretty much the gist of
22 it.

23 He didn't seem concerned or consumed about
24 the upcoming rest of the voyage or anything like that.

25 MR. FURUKAWA: You guys didn't talk about

1 the weather or the hurricane or tropical storm?

2 CAPT. STITH: I actually don't believe so.
3 I remember we were heading north and we were heading
4 into the headwind. They would have had a tailwind,
5 which may have -- for us, we had gusty winds. So, I
6 think I just said, "Yeah, things are pretty gusty
7 around here." And I can't remember if he said anything
8 or not, but that would probably have been the extent of
9 it.

10 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. Did anybody else talk
11 to the Chief Mate?

12 CAPT. STITH: I believe El Yunque's Chief
13 Mate at the time may have initiated the VHF call, or
14 vice versa. So, I believe the Chief Mate may have done
15 it. Okay.

16 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. And who's that?

17 CAPT. STITH: His name is Kwesi, K-W-E-S-I,
18 Amoo, A-M-O-O.

19 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. Thank you.

20 Let's see. I'm sorry about that. But for
21 the emails to the Captain, do you have those emails or
22 just a record of those? Or can you tell me about the
23 content of those emails?

24 CAPT. STITH: I believe the emails, you
25 know, they still should be on the ship. From what I

1 recall, the emails, basically, I sent an email to
2 Captain Davidson saying that we had departed and that I
3 had increased speed to get ahead northwest of the
4 tropical storm, or whatever it was. And I asked how
5 they were doing and basically to stay safe.

6 He emailed back and said that he had decided
7 to go take his route a little bit more southerly and
8 predicted that he would be about 65 miles away from the
9 center of the storm and that he should be south of it.

10 And then, the next email that I sent -- and
11 this time lapse, you know, was maybe 12 hours or maybe
12 even 24 hours; I can't remember -- but I emailed him
13 again saying that we were northwest of the storm and
14 basically to have a safe voyage. And I think we
15 experienced a 100-knot wind, relative wind gust, but
16 everything was good. So, that was the last that I
17 remember.

18 MR. KUCHARSKI: This is Mike Kucharski.

19 So, in that 100-knot wind, you didn't have a
20 sea over 20-foot?

21 CAPT. STITH: No. No, we did not.

22 MR. KUCHARSKI: Thank you.

23 MR. FURUKAWA: Jon Furukawa again.

24 So, for Captain Davidson, he altered his
25 voyage --

1 CAPT. STITH: Yes.

2 MR. FURUKAWA: -- south? And did you alter
3 your voyage to --

4 CAPT. STITH: The only adjustment I made was
5 in the speed. When we leave San Juan, Puerto Rico, we
6 have a timed arrival for Jacksonville which does not
7 require us to go max RPM, full speed.

8 So, once I saw that the storm, even though
9 it was predicted to go north, was tracking to the
10 southwest, I decided that the best way for us to deal
11 with that situation, in the event that it continued to
12 track southwest, as to oppose what was predicted. All
13 the information that I had showed that the storm was
14 going to turn north. For quite a few days, the storm
15 was predicting to turn north and even back to the
16 northeast, but, in reality, the storm was still
17 tracking to the southwest.

18 So, my best option at that time was to
19 increase, max RPMs and get ahead of the storm. So,
20 that was the only alteration that we made.

21 MR. FURUKAWA: And were you able to?

22 CAPT. STITH: Yes.

23 MR. FURUKAWA: Well, what kind of speed were
24 you making for max RPM?

25 CAPT. STITH: Twenty-two knots.

1 MR. FURUKAWA: And that was with the
2 headwinds?

3 CAPT. STITH: Once we started experiencing
4 those headwinds, once we were on the west side of the
5 hurricane, we were probably going 19.5 or 20 knots.

6 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. So, normally, with I
7 guess calm seas, if you went max RPMs, the ship would
8 do 22 knots?

9 CAPT. STITH: Yes.

10 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. To do 19 or 20 knots,
11 headwinds, okay.

12 All right. I think that's it. Thank you
13 very much.

14 CAPT. STITH: Okay.

15 MR. KUCHARSKI: Michael Kucharski.

16 In follow up with your conversations, at no
17 time was anything ever mentioned in regards to the
18 material condition of the vessel or the maintenance or
19 anything going on with any of the equipment?

20 CAPT. STITH: In regards to what? In the
21 emails?

22 MR. KUCHARSKI: Material condition, yes. In
23 your VHF conversation --

24 CAPT. STITH: Oh, oh, oh.

25 MR. KUCHARSKI: -- was anything ever

1 discussed with anything --

2 CAPT. STITH: Yes.

3 MR. KUCHARSKI: -- any issues with the
4 vessel?

5 CAPT. STITH: In Kevin Davidson's one email,
6 he said that he had briefed the crew, that he had
7 briefed the crew and that, from what I remember, they
8 were prepared, you know, prepared to go, to make it
9 past the storm.

10 MR. KUCHARSKI: Thank you.

11 CAPT. STITH: Uh-hum.

12 MR. KUCHARSKI: Carrie?

13 MS. BELL: This is Carrie Bell. I have a
14 few questions for you.

15 You just mentioned the schedule, and you
16 have a timeframe that you typically get back to
17 Jacksonville, a time that you normally get to Puerto
18 Rico. You're kind of set on a schedule, right?

19 CAPT. STITH: Yes.

20 MS. BELL: Would you say that -- are there
21 any kind of incentives for you to maintain that
22 schedule?

23 CAPT. STITH: No.

24 MS. BELL: Would you say that maintaining a
25 schedule is a priority as a Master or just in general

1 for the company to maintain that schedule?

2 CAPT. STITH: I would say that it was our
3 job and it was part of our job description, important
4 to get there on schedule, just as a matter of being a
5 professional. In the event that you were off-schedule,
6 it was just a simple matter of notifying them and
7 saying, "Hey, it looks like we're going to be late."
8 And they would adjust without question. In my
9 experience, you know, if we were a half-hour late or an
10 hour late, they would just say, "Okay, we've changed
11 the pilots." And there was not even a question, you
12 know, "Hey, what's going on?" or anything like that.

13 MS. BELL: Okay. So, there weren't any kind
14 of -- if you did not maintain that schedule -- let me
15 ask you this: was there ever a time that you did not
16 meet schedule?

17 CAPT. STITH: On the El Yunque while I was
18 Captain, no. On the El Faro, while I was there as
19 Chief Mate, we were late one time because we had taken
20 another route to keep our distance from another weather
21 system that was out there. And I can't remember how
22 late we were, but it wasn't an issue.

23 MS. BELL: Okay. Is there paperwork or
24 anything like that that has to be filled out if you're
25 late, any kind of administrative work that has to be

1 done on your part?

2 CAPT. STITH: No. No.

3 MS. BELL: Okay.

4 CAPT. STITH: It's just a matter of
5 notifications.

6 MR. KUCHARSKI: To follow on on that
7 question, normally you came in in the evening? What
8 time was cargo start the next day?

9 CAPT. STITH: Oh, cargo starts immediately
10 upon arrival. So, if we docked at 2000, at 2000 and 30
11 seconds the container trains are starting to lift
12 containers off and the ramp comes on usually within an
13 hour, depending on if they have to start unloading the
14 aft section, take the containers off, if they need to
15 work that. But, typically, in San Juan they bring the
16 ramp on right away on arrival. So, yes.

17 MR. KUCHARSKI: And you work continuously
18 'til --

19 CAPT. STITH: Continuously, and it's
20 typically a timed departure. They typically allow in
21 Jacksonville 24 hours for cargo ops, and in San Juan,
22 typically, 12 to 16 hours, I would say, 12 hours for
23 cargo ops, depending on the labor that's available to
24 offload the cargo and load it, load it back.

25 MS. BELL: So, when you're in port and if

1 it's 24 hours, is the crew working through that 24
2 hours? Are you still maintaining your rest --

3 CAPT. STITH: Yes.

4 MS. BELL: Sorry.

5 CAPT. STITH: No, the crew is still working.
6 Like I said, the deck officers switch to a six-and-six
7 watch. All the other unlicensed deck members stay on
8 there. Their work schedule is either day work or
9 watches. The same with engineers.

10 Typically, when we get back in Jacksonville,
11 we may request what's call standbys for the unlicensed
12 crew. They get a day off and the standby fills in. We
13 also get a port mate to assist the deck officers,
14 especially with loading the reefers. We also get
15 additional standbys to assist with plugging and
16 unplugging the reefers. So, typically, when the ship
17 comes in, they'll get a port mate and one or two
18 additional members to help with the reefer containers.

19 MS. BELL: Okay. So, would you say during
20 the time that you're in port when you're on the six-
21 and-six, would you say you get adequate rest during
22 that time?

23 CAPT. STITH: What I would say is the six-
24 and-six schedule for anybody, you get a six-hour rest
25 period. Everybody is different in how much rest they

1 need. With my experience, the officers, the deck
2 officers were used to that schedule, and I never saw
3 them have any issues with that schedule. So, that's
4 really what I think about it.

5 MS. BELL: Did you have any issues with that
6 schedule personally?

7 CAPT. STITH: No, because I didn't have to
8 stand, you know.

9 (Laughter.)

10 MS. BELL: Right.

11 CAPT. STITH: I personally, you know, as
12 Chief Mate, that was really the only option that we had
13 to get everything done in a timely manner, and it
14 worked out for arrivals and departures, for putting
15 crew members, the Second Mate on the stern and the
16 Third Mate on the bridge, and things like that.

17 There was also a practice that, if the Chief
18 Mate, if he had exceeded his rest hours periods and he
19 couldn't come on watch at 4:00 in the morning, and it
20 would be the Second Mate was getting close to his rest
21 hour period at 4:00 in the morning, the Captain would
22 come up and stand that two-hour block from 6:00 to
23 8:00.

24 So, that was the standard practice. Captain
25 Davidson did it. He would also tell people, "Hey, you

1 got enough rest?" He told me on a number of occasions
2 just to go lay down and turn my radio off, turn the
3 lights out. He would come in my office and turn the
4 lights out for me.

5 (Laughter.)

6 So, I know that he was very attentive to
7 that, as I would monitor everybody's rest hours and
8 make sure they were keeping in line with that.

9 MS. BELL: So, how well would you say rest
10 on the ship, either during the cargo -- when you're in
11 port, when you're getting cargo and, also, at sea? How
12 would you say you rest?

13 CAPT. STITH: I would think just the nature
14 of the situation you get more rest out at sea, better
15 quality rest. In port, things are kind of chaotic,
16 noisy, and there's so much going on. Maybe the quality
17 of rest isn't as good. Out at sea it's nice and calm
18 and peaceful.

19 MS. BELL: Okay.

20 CAPT. STITH: So, that's what I have to say
21 about.

22 MS. BELL: So, earlier you mentioned that
23 you managed the OT budget, the overtime budget?

24 CAPT. STITH: Yes.

25 MS. BELL: So, what would you say is an

1 average overtime for a crew member per week?

2 CAPT. STITH: Overtime per week would be
3 approximately 24 hours.

4 MS. BELL: And are there any kind of
5 incentives for keeping a schedule, being on time, back
6 to sort of being on time, getting into port? Any kind
7 of incentives for that --

8 CAPT. STITH: No.

9 MS. BELL: -- aside from overtime?

10 CAPT. STITH: No.

11 MS. BELL: Okay.

12 MR. KUCHARSKI: Is (inaudible) and the total
13 hours worked that week between -- are the weekends
14 counted as overtime?

15 CAPT. STITH: Well, without union
16 contractual confusement, as I like to put it, if a
17 typical person works eight hours in a day, that's your
18 workday. I'm saying that anything additional is
19 overtime. So, I'm not even thinking about any of that.
20 So, typically, in addition to a person's eight-hour
21 day, they would typically work four hours a day six
22 days a week. So, that's where the 24-hour number comes
23 from.

24 MS. BELL: Do you have a maximum number of
25 overtime hours per week or per day?

1 CAPT. STITH: Only as it relates to the STCW
2 rest hours, which typically is either four or five
3 hours a day.

4 MS. BELL: Okay. Is there any kind of a
5 risk assessment process that you guys used for
6 departing or getting underway in weather conditions or
7 any kind of risk assessment that you used typically for
8 leaving?

9 CAPT. STITH: All that comes in underneath
10 the voyage-planning process.

11 MS. BELL: Is there anyone outside of the
12 company that consults that or who are the people that
13 approve that?

14 CAPT. STITH: The people involved in the
15 process are the Master, the Second Mate, and I guess,
16 by default, the Chief Mate and the Third Mate because
17 they also look at the voyage plan because they have to
18 use it.

19 MS. BELL: So, no one outside of your crew
20 will look at that to determine risk?

21 CAPT. STITH: There is an occasion. Those
22 records, those documents are available for internal and
23 external audits, and they are typically looked at
24 during internal audits by the company and external
25 audits by ABS for ISM compliance.

1 MS. BELL: Okay. Is there any kind of a
2 bonus that you get for meeting the schedule?

3 CAPT. STITH: No.

4 MS. BELL: Any kind of performance bonuses
5 you guys get?

6 CAPT. STITH: No.

7 MR. KUCHARSKI: Let me, just a quick
8 question on what you previously asked or you answered
9 about audit.

10 This is Mike Kucharski speaking.

11 Were there internal audits that were non-
12 SQM, say navigation or safety audits or anything where
13 you had riders onboard?

14 CAPT. STITH: Not to my knowledge and not in
15 my experience onboard. There may have been vetting
16 inspections and other things like, but not to my
17 knowledge.

18 MS. BELL: Do you know anything about a
19 company Speakup Phone Line, hotline?

20 CAPT. STITH: Yes. It's basically another
21 means of communication for somebody to contact the
22 company if they feel like something isn't being
23 properly addressed onboard where they can remain
24 anonymous and report a situation.

25 MS. BELL: Is there any kind of a company

1 policy on alcohol and drug?

2 CAPT. STITH: Yes. The company's policy is
3 in line with the federal laws, which basically requires
4 somebody who has a safety duty onboard the ship, which
5 if you have a station bill duty, you have safety duty,
6 you can't have a percentage of blood alcohol in your
7 system, you know, above the legal limit.

8 (Pause.)

9 MS. BELL: Sorry.

10 CAPT. STITH: No, that's okay.

11 MS. BELL: I'm just trying to make sure I've
12 got them all.

13 What is your view of the company as it
14 relates to safety?

15 CAPT. STITH: My personal view is that, in
16 my time with them which started in 2001, is that they
17 have become more aware and placed a higher priority on
18 a safety culture, on making sure that everybody has a
19 safe working environment, and that the safety of their
20 people is very important to them.

21 Like I said, I think it's improved over the
22 years, from my last experience with them, and that,
23 even now, with the new ships be LNG-powered, that it's
24 a top priority for them.

25 MS. BELL: Would you say there are any

1 incentives for meeting safety standards?

2 CAPT. STITH: No.

3 MS. BELL: And you mentioned Captain
4 Davidson was coming back on when you -- or he had been
5 on vacation. So, is he new to the company or --

6 CAPT. STITH: No, he's been, from what I
7 understand, he's been with TOTE for somewhere between
8 five and ten years.

9 MS. BELL: Okay. And I have one more
10 question. You mentioned the probationary period. How
11 long is that with this company?

12 CAPT. STITH: It's not specifically laid
13 out. I just said that as a generalization, and I would
14 say that they're still evaluating me.

15 MS. BELL: Okay.

16 MR. [REDACTED] [REDACTED] the Coast
17 Guard.

18 Thanks for hanging in there, Captain. It is
19 two hours and a half, and you've been holding very
20 well.

21 You mentioned the safety, positions on a
22 station bill, you couldn't have a blood alcohol limit
23 over a certain amount. How did you verify compliance
24 with that onboard the vessel?

25 CAPT. STITH: Well, the policy is posted.

1 Everybody is trained on it. All the deck officers and
2 the people who stand the gangway watch are instructed
3 to notify me if there are any issues, if they see
4 somebody who they think is under the influence. So,
5 the company has a policy of testing, either pre-
6 employment, reasonable cause, or serious marine
7 accident. So, we have onboard -- what's it called? --
8 QEDs, a swap that's used to swap the inside of a
9 person's mouth to detect -- it will turn, I believe, a
10 purple color if blood alcohol is detected.

11 So, I've never had an instance in my
12 experience with either of these vessels or other
13 vessels to do a reasonable-cause for somebody, only
14 post-accident. So, that's how we deal with it.
15 Basically, observe people's behavior and, if there's
16 reasonable cause, then pursue that, aside from
17 training, you know.

18 MR. [REDACTED] If I come aboard the vessel as
19 a crew member and I'm taking prescribed medication or
20 I'm prescribed medication and I'm not taking the
21 medication or I'm taking over-the-counter medications,
22 how do I tell the ship that status?

23 CAPT. STITH: Well, you sign onboard the
24 vessel. As soon as you come on, you complete a -- I
25 believe the term is a Seaman's Fitness Certification

1 Form. And it's basically a form from TOTE and you
2 answer -- it's basically a questionnaire and a fill-in-
3 the-blank where you certify that you're fit and that
4 you don't have any issues. And then, you list any
5 medications or any injuries or any surgeries that
6 you've had.

7 So, when you sign on, the Captain reviews
8 that, and the Captain also signs that stating that he
9 has reviewed it. So, he knows if you're a diabetic or
10 high blood pressure, or, you know, whatever the
11 situation may be.

12 The unions also provide the seamen with a
13 drug-free card stating, you know, that they're in a
14 random drug program, a drug-testing program, and that
15 under those circumstances or statutes, that they are
16 able to go back to work.

17 MR. [REDACTED] Does your company require, if
18 someone is taking like Sudafed or those type of over-
19 the-counter medications, that they are to report them
20 to you?

21 CAPT. STITH: Unless they're specifically
22 listed on that form when they sign on, I would more
23 than likely not know about it.

24 MR. [REDACTED] Circling back on the voyage
25 plan and risk assessment, a voyage plan takes into

1 account a lot of factors, but how does it take into
2 account the actual voyage plan, the risk assessment for
3 weather?

4 CAPT. STITH: There's basically a checklist
5 or a checkbox asking if weather has been reviewed for
6 the voyage. So, that's basically it.

7 MR. [REDACTED] I have a couple of simple
8 questions. On the El Faro, generally speaking, how is
9 the food?

10 CAPT. STITH: I would say very good.

11 MR. [REDACTED] Okay. And how about the
12 ventilation, you know, in crew spaces when you're
13 trying to sleep?

14 CAPT. STITH: For my taste, it's too cold,
15 but, you know, it's very good, yes.

16 MR. [REDACTED] And in terms of sleeping, how
17 did the ship ride? Was it a violent roll --

18 CAPT. STITH: No.

19 MR. [REDACTED] -- or gentle?

20 CAPT. STITH: Oh, it was, for me, it was a
21 dream. It was nice. It was easy. It was very, very
22 stable. I never had any issues. The ship rode very
23 well.

24 MR. [REDACTED] And a final question. You
25 were on both ships. So, was there a discernible

1 difference in the safety culture on either ship or were
2 they very similar?

3 CAPT. STITH: I would say, my background and
4 where I come from, like I said before, I have high
5 expectations. So, I also like to lead from the front.
6 And so, what I expect out of people in safety is I have
7 a lot of expectations. So, as Captain of the El
8 Yunque, I like to take it to the next level. I think,
9 before I got there, the El Yunque and the El Faro had a
10 very good safety culture. When I got to the El Yunque,
11 I wanted to basically take it to the next level and
12 just make things better.

13 You know, so in my estimation, nothing stays
14 the same. Either you get better or you get worse. So,
15 if you're getting better, you know you're going in the
16 right direction. You know, you're not getting worse.

17 So, I think that they had a very good safety
18 culture.

19 MR. [REDACTED] Okay. So, of all ships?

20 CAPT. STITH: Yes.

21 MR. [REDACTED] Okay. Thank you.

22 MR. KUCHARSKI: Kevin, just a quick follow-
23 on. This is Mike Kucharski.

24 The permanent crew on the vessel, Master,
25 Mate, do you have two permanent Masters, two permanent

1 Mates? Is that how it generally worked?

2 CAPT. STITH: To my knowledge, that's how it
3 had worked. Since we were in a transition with
4 bringing the new ships to the service, some people were
5 transitioning to those new ships. Some people were
6 staying. So, they had been bringing in some other
7 people from other places, including myself.

8 So, to my knowledge, there was Captain
9 Davidson. His relief had not been determined at that
10 point.

11 MR. KUCHARSKI: And the rest, did you have a
12 permanent Second Mate? Did they have a permanent --

13 CAPT. STITH: Yes, they had a permanent
14 Second Mate. Because I was only there for one
15 rotation, I can't really speak to a lot of people to
16 really know. That's what I know.

17 MR. KUCHARSKI: Thank you.

18 CAPT. STITH: Yes.

19 MR. KUCHARSKI: We'll follow up with HR
20 then. Thank you.

21 MR. [REDACTED] [REDACTED] with the U.S. Coast
22 Guard.

23 So, most of the questions I had have already
24 been covered. So, hopefully, it won't take too long.

25 As far as the drills go, was there ever an

1 instance where you did what was called like a tabletop
2 drill in lieu of doing a full-equipment drill where the
3 crew responded and actually executed a drill? Or with
4 some companies it is common for them to call it a drill
5 when everybody just gets together and talks everybody
6 through what they would do. Is that something you
7 ever --

8 CAPT. STITH: I can't remember ever doing
9 anything like that.

10 MR. [REDACTED] Okay. So, all your drills always
11 required a response?

12 CAPT. STITH: Yes, yes.

13 MR. [REDACTED] And use of equipment?

14 CAPT. STITH: Yes.

15 MR. [REDACTED] And exercising of --

16 CAPT. STITH: Well, yes, while I was Chief
17 Mate there, yes.

18 MR. [REDACTED] Okay. So, I know you're the
19 Master, but as far as maintenance and critical
20 equipment onboard the ship, you know, the relationship
21 between the Chief Engineer and the Master and doing
22 risk analysis whenever there was something relatively
23 major going on with vessel equipment, how did you guys
24 do risk assessment and how did you make decisions on
25 how you were going to deal with the issue of critical

1 equipment failures?

2 CAPT. STITH: I can't say that I know too
3 much about that. As far as the El Faro, I know that
4 there is a job hazard analysis, you know, like a risk
5 analysis or a risk assessment, that we do for
6 undertaking jobs. But, as far as responding to like a
7 casualty or something like that, you know, they just
8 have the drills. They go back and rely on the drills
9 that they do on a quarterly basis as far as responding
10 to things.

11 MR. [REDACTED] So, as far as overdue maintenance
12 and things like that, are you familiar with who had the
13 authority to defer preventative maintenance and --

14 CAPT. STITH: In the maintenance system, I
15 don't know. I don't know who exactly has those rights.

16 MR. [REDACTED] I think the Intec crew, did they
17 have any ability to communicate shore-side? Did they
18 have a satellite phone or anything?

19 CAPT. STITH: No.

20 MR. [REDACTED] Any communication equipment with
21 them that would have been given to them, all their
22 communications would have gone through --

23 CAPT. STITH: Through the ship, yes.

24 MR. [REDACTED] Through the ship? Okay.

25 MR. KUCHARSKI: And intec is who?

1 This is Mike Kucharski.

2 CAPT. STITH: Intec? I-M-tec?

3 MR. [REDACTED] Intec, I-N-T-E-C, is the Polish
4 contractor.

5 CAPT. STITH: There is another contractor
6 that has a very similar name.

7 MR. KUCHARSKI: And who might that be?

8 CAPT. STITH: They're Imtech, I-M-T-E-C-H.

9 MR. KUCHARSKI: And they do what?

10 CAPT. STITH: They do service for the bridge
11 equipment.

12 MR. KUCHARSKI: Bridge equipment. Okay.
13 So, we have Intec --

14 CAPT. STITH: That's the Polish contractor.

15 MR. KUCHARSKI: -- the Polish riding crew
16 contractor. And then, do they also do, this Intec, do
17 they also do, besides riding crew stuff, do they do
18 repairs about the ship?

19 CAPT. STITH: They did, I believe, some
20 minor fabrication and different things, maybe a flange-
21 like piece or something.

22 So, I'm sorry, did we answer your question?

23 MR. [REDACTED] You did.

24 CAPT. STITH: Okay.

25 MR. [REDACTED] I just wanted to know if they had

1 the ability to communicate with their office or --

2 CAPT. STITH: Oh, no.

3 MR. [REDACTED] -- or any chat phone or anything.

4 CAPT. STITH: No.

5 MR. [REDACTED] Okay. So, can you define
6 overriding authority for us?

7 CAPT. STITH: Basically, it's the authority
8 of the Master to make decisions based on the safety of
9 the vessel. Basically, his authority is what goes, you
10 know.

11 MR. [REDACTED] And on the bilge alarm and the
12 (inaudible) is there any preventative maintenance
13 system or any free underway check to make sure that
14 they were functioning properly?

15 CAPT. STITH: I believe it's on a monthly
16 basis they do bilge line testing.

17 MR. [REDACTED] If there was any type of error in
18 the circuitry or anything, would there be any
19 indication with that --

20 CAPT. STITH: Well, what they do is they go
21 down and actually they lift float, and if it doesn't
22 alarm, then they'll troubleshoot it.

23 MR. [REDACTED] (Inaudible).

24 CAPT. STITH: Yes, that would be it.

25 MR. [REDACTED] All right. And evaluations, does

1 the company have any evaluation of an employee for
2 evaluation as far as competency? Do you have like a
3 monthly or an annual --

4 CAPT. STITH: It's usually done per tour.
5 So, the officers, the deck officers, would be evaluated
6 by the Master. The unlicensed crew would be evaluated
7 by department heads. And I believe the Chief Engineer
8 is evaluated by the Port Engineer, and I don't know who
9 does the Captain.

10 MR. [REDACTED] So, in those evaluations they
11 address things like competency, and what else would
12 they --

13 CAPT. STITH: Leadership skill, initiative,
14 technical knowledge, ability, those types of things.

15 MR. [REDACTED] And that's documented in a
16 standard form or --

17 CAPT. STITH: Yes, it's a one-page like
18 checklist-type thing.

19 MR. [REDACTED] Okay. So, in your opinion, would
20 you say that the safety management system is an
21 integrated part of the operations of the company or is
22 it kind of a --

23 CAPT. STITH: Yes.

24 MR. [REDACTED] -- separate standalone --

25 CAPT. STITH: No.

1 MR. [REDACTED] It's fully integrated, fully
2 implemented, and --

3 CAPT. STITH: Yes.

4 MR. [REDACTED] -- everybody's familiar with it?

5 CAPT. STITH: Oh, yes.

6 MR. [REDACTED] How would you say the
7 relationship is between the crew and management? Is it
8 a strong relationship? Is it strained? Is it --

9 CAPT. STITH: I think it's very good. I
10 think the management is very open. They come down to
11 the ship every time we're in port. We not only get --
12 the Port Engineer stays with the ship, basically,
13 babysits the ship the entire time it's in port. The
14 Port Captain comes. And when even upper management or
15 executives come to the ship, they feel very open
16 talking to unlicensed crew and anybody who's out there.
17 I think it's on that level where they have that
18 communication.

19 MR. [REDACTED] And are you familiar with the
20 alternate compliance program?

21 CAPT. STITH: Yes.

22 MR. [REDACTED] And so, you guys are preparing --
23 you've been onboard -- are you preparing for an ABS
24 survey or (inaudible)?

25 CAPT. STITH: Yes.

1 MR. [REDACTED] Do you guys do extensive
2 preparation for those inspections and examinations?

3 CAPT. STITH: Actually, no, because
4 everything is being done continuously. On the El
5 Yunque we recently had an internal audit, and I said to
6 myself, oh, I'd better get ready. But everything was
7 already ready because it was already being done.

8 Basically, we're repeating everything every
9 other week. And so, it's just a matter of redoing
10 stuff, and everything pretty much falls into place.

11 MR. [REDACTED] So, you would say the vessel is
12 in a state of continuous compliance?

13 CAPT. STITH: Yes.

14 MR. [REDACTED] And you don't have a lot of
15 preparation for it?

16 CAPT. STITH: Yes.

17 MR. [REDACTED] Okay. And can you give us a
18 quick rundown on how marine casualty reporting
19 notifications get made?

20 CAPT. STITH: Yes.

21 MR. [REDACTED] Who is responsible for notifying
22 the Coast Guard?

23 CAPT. STITH: Well, basically, like I stated
24 before, the emergency response telephone number, when
25 the emergency response team gets together, some of

1 those notifications are delegated out to them if the
2 Captain is involved in handling the situation. If not,
3 he can make some of those notifications, and then,
4 making out the 2692 is done onboard. The company has
5 an incident package with -- it's already pre-made-out
6 with all the forms necessary. Witness statements, non-
7 witness statements, the 2692, photographs, all that
8 stuff is filled out, prepared and forwarded to the
9 office.

10 MR. [REDACTED] So, generally, is it management
11 that makes the decision to report a marine casualty and
12 make the determination that it is a marine casualty
13 that needs to be reported?

14 CAPT. STITH: I would say that they are
15 consulted. I think it's pretty obvious on a lot of the
16 things that I've seen, some injuries or equipment
17 failures or what have you, oil spills -- so, yes, I
18 think in my experience, it has been the Captain has
19 said, "Hey, I've got the 2692 ready," you know.

20 MR. [REDACTED] Okay.

21 CAPT. STITH: "Do you want to take a look at
22 it before I send it in?"

23 MR. [REDACTED] So, have you experienced or
24 witnessed a situation where management has questioned
25 whether something is a reportable or not a reportable

1 marine casualty and (inaudible) or ABS not being
2 notified? Maybe they determine that it's not a
3 casualty?

4 CAPT. STITH: I can't say that I have. Yes,
5 I can't say that I have experienced that.

6 MR. [REDACTED] Well, I'm good. Thank you very
7 much.

8 CAPT. STITH: Yes.

9 MR. KUCHARSKI: Could I do a follow-on for
10 one of your questions? You said that the Port Engineer
11 would stay onboard the ship when it came in port. And
12 you were a Port Engineer for four years?

13 CAPT. STITH: No, only for about three
14 months.

15 MR. KUCHARSKI: For three months?

16 CAPT. STITH: Yes.

17 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay, okay. Were you Port
18 Engineer for one of these --

19 CAPT. STITH: No, just while a government
20 vessel, two government vessels were being drydocked.

21 MR. KUCHARSKI: For TOTE?

22 CAPT. STITH: Yes.

23 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. Thank you.

24 CAPT. STITH: Okay.

25 MS. BELL: Carrie Bell, NTSB.

1 I just have one more question. Do you have
2 any knowledge of any crew members or officers on either
3 ship who have left the company due to safety concerns?

4 CAPT. STITH: No, I don't.

5 MS. BELL: Thank you.

6 MR. KUCHARSKI: No questions?

7 (No response.)

8 MR. [REDACTED] I just have one, and then,
9 Commander [REDACTED] who had to leave, left me a list.
10 Unfortunately, he had to leave in the middle of it.
11 He's on the Survival Factors Team.

12 Just one question from me personally. The
13 Intec riding gang, you mentioned, you described their
14 work and that they were making preps for the vessel
15 regarding heating lines, piping, some electrical work.
16 And you also said that you were instructed, basically,
17 to maintain the ship as if it was going to be run
18 indefinitely. Can you tell me a little bit more about
19 what type of preps they were doing? Like what they
20 were preparing the vessel for, not the specific work,
21 but the future plans for the vessel?

22 CAPT. STITH: As I understand it, they were
23 running heating lines and putting equipment back on for
24 the vessel to operate on the West Coast and go to
25 Alaska, Washington State to Alaska.

1 MR. [REDACTED] Okay. Thanks.

2 And then, from Commander [REDACTED] his
3 questions are on the survival factor side.
4 Specifically, the EPIRB --

5 CAPT. STITH: Uh-hum.

6 MR. [REDACTED] -- function testing, how often
7 that's performed and who performs that testing and on
8 what regular basis?

9 CAPT. STITH: Yes. I believe it's monthly.
10 The Second Mate does all the pre-departure or GMDSS
11 testing, logs it, keeps the printouts from the tests.
12 Those were all kept in the GMDSS logbook and all the
13 EPIRBs, the EPIRB tests and inspections in the Safety
14 Inspections Binder.

15 MR. [REDACTED] Okay. And then, the final
16 question. What crew training is there on the operation
17 of the EPIRB. Are there only certain individuals who
18 are allowed to operate that?

19 CAPT. STITH: There's quarterly track
20 training. So, basically, after we do a fire-and-boat
21 drill, we'll gather in the crew mess and they'll bring
22 down the EPIRB and they'll show them the EPIRB, and
23 this is how it works and what it does.

24 MR. [REDACTED] So, anyone can operate that
25 equipment?

1 CAPT. STITH: Yes.

2 MR. [REDACTED] Okay. That's all I have.

3 MR. KUCHARSKI: One last, SOPs, Standard
4 Operating Procedures, were there any deck-listed SOPs
5 in a booklet or anything like that?

6 CAPT. STITH: Mainly, just for cargo, cargo
7 operations, there were a few SOPs. And maybe some
8 other things up on the bridge, just for operating
9 equipment, things like that, you know.

10 MR. KUCHARSKI: Any last questions?

11 (No response.)

12 Do you have any questions for us? Now it's
13 your turn.

14 CAPT. STITH: Yes. I've got to interview
15 myself (laughter). No, I don't. I don't. I don't
16 have any questions.

17 MR. KUCHARSKI: Thank you, everyone. Thank
18 you very much, Captain Stith.

19 CAPT. STITH: All right.

20 MR. KUCHARSKI: I've been there. I'll note
21 it's 13:39, and this will end the interview of Captain
22 Stith.

23 (Whereupon, at 1:39 p.m., the interview was
24 concluded.)

25

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C E R T I F I C A T E

MATTER: El Faro Incident
Accident No. DCA16MM001
Interview of Kevin Stith
Jacksonville, Florida

DATE: 10-07-15

I hereby certify that the attached transcription of page 1 to 139 inclusive are to the best of my professional ability a true, accurate, and complete record of the above referenced proceedings as contained on the provided audio recording; further that I am neither counsel for, nor related to, nor employed by any of the parties to this action in which this proceeding has taken place; and further that I am not financially nor otherwise interested in the outcome of the action.



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NTSB Response (**in bold blue**) to Table of Corrections to Transcript of
Interview for
Captain Kevin Stith
Taken on: Wednesday, October 7, 2015

<u>Page Number</u>	<u>LINE NUMBER</u>	<u>CURRENT WORDING</u>	<u>SUGGESTED CORRECTED WORDING</u>	NTSB RESPONSE
2	8	SMITH	STITH	AGREE
2	9	Good	MR. KUCHARSKI: Good	AGREE
3	9	objection	objecting	DO NOT AGREE, Transcript correct as is
4	11	group	groups	DO NOT AGREE, Transcript correct as is
6	25	their	the	AGREE
7	22	charters	charterers	AGREE
8	8	Marspawn	Maersk Line	AGREE
9	1	went	go	Do not agree; sounds like "go into"
9	23	We're	They're	DO NOT AGREE, Transcript correct as is
11	25	probably	properly	Do not agree; sounds like "broadly"
13	8	19	18	AGREE
13	13	wenches	winches	AGREE
13	13	wench	winch	AGREE
16	10	aforeships'	athwartships	AGREE
17	24	PATeyes	PADEYES	AGREE
18	16	remarks	Remarked	AGREE

Page Number	LINE NUMBER	CURRENT WORDING	SUGGESTED CORRECTED WORDING	NTSB RESPONSE
21	12	hours, cargo	Hours of cargo	DO NOT AGREE, Transcript correct as is
22	13	considerable	Considerably	DO NOT AGREE, Transcript correct as is
26	24	del	Deal	AGREE
27	23	in	An	DO NOT AGREE, Transcript correct as is
28	9	best to maintain	Two best maintained	DO NOT AGREE, Transcript correct as is
31	7	globe	Globe	AGREE
32	4	AVS	ABS	AGREE
32	7	required by DSE	required. The DSC	AGREE
32	7	acquired	are required	AGREE
32	11	Identificationing	Identification	DO NOT AGREE, Transcript correct as is
32	13	the other	have another	DO NOT AGREE, Transcript correct as is
32	14	GMDSS,	GMDSS	AGREE
32	24-25	indicating Radio beacon	Indicating Radio Beacon	AGREE
33	6	starboard	starboard,	AGREE
33	6	the bulkhead	bulkhead	AGREE
34	1	security	securite	AGREE
34	9	stress	distress	AGREE
35	6	stress	distress	AGREE

Page Number	LINE NUMBER	CURRENT WORDING	SUGGESTED CORRECTED WORDING	NTSB RESPONSE
35 36	17	or	on	DO NOT AGREE, Transcript correct as is
36	2	a quick	quick	Do not agree. Sounds like "a few quick"
36	14	DSE's	DSC's	AGREE
36	23	Amber	AMVER	AGREE
37	10	sign	send	AGREE
37	12	Marsat	Inmarsat	AGREE
38	3	Marsat	Inmarsat	AGREE
38	23	Marsat	Inmarsat	AGREE
39	3-4	emergency response team	Emergency Response Team	AGREE
40	23-24	emergency response team	Emergency Response Team	AGREE
40	25	say	says	AGREE
41	2	they're	they are	Do Not Agree. Sounds like "they're at"
41	5	emergency response team	Emergency Response Team	AGREE
42	4	Amber	AMVER	AGREE
42	18	spill HAZMAT	spiii/HAZMAT	DO NOT AGREE, Transcript correct as is
	23	phones	phone	Do not agree. Sounds like "Have any iridium cell phones."

Page Number	LINE NUMBER	CURRENT WORDING	SUGGESTED CORRECTED WORDING	NTSB RESPONSE
43	17	with or	with our	Do not agree. No such wording on this line
43	20	patches	hatches	AGREE
44	14	row/row	RO/RO	AGREE
45	11	railroad car	cargo	Do not agree. Sounds like "Ro Ro cargo"
45	20	demarcation	debarkation	AGREE
46	5	round	rounds	AGREE
46	10	sign	side	Correct as is.
46	11	wanted	want	AGREE
49	1	of the	off the	AGREE
49	18	staff's	ship's	Do not agree
50	16	water vapor	watertight door	AGREE
50	22	down	down to	AGREE
51	19, 22	combing	coaming	AGREE
53	5	wenches	winches	AGREE
54	13	flow	float	AGREE
56	10	that	the	DO NOT AGREE, Transcript correct as is
56	11	off	pump	AGREE
56	17	man	Mate	AGREE

Page Number	LINE NUMBER	CURRENT WORDING	SUGGESTED CORRECTED WORDING	NTSB RESPONSE
56	17	ABM	AB on	AGREE
57	13	stodge	stowed	Do not agree. Sounds like "stowage"
57	13	secured	secure it	AGREE
57	14	a	I'd	DO NOT AGREE, Transcript correct as is
57	22	up in here	on there	DO NOT AGREE, Transcript correct as is
57	24	core-related	a quarterly	AGREE
58	4-5	side,too	side to	AGREE
58	17	where	when	DO NOT AGREE, Transcript correct as is
59	24	was	were	DO NOT AGREE, Transcript correct as is
60	3	loaded	lowered	AGREE
61	5	would you	would ask you	Do not agree. Sounds like "like you to do"
61	15	musts	musters	AGREE
62	13	yang	yank	AGREE
62	23	of the ladder	ladder	DO NOT AGREE, Transcript correct as is
63	17	AVS	ABS	AGREE
63	22	fire boat	fire and boat	AGREE
64	6	fire boat	fire and boat	AGREE
66	18	core	quarterly	AGREE
67	3	forward-ship	athwartship	AGREE

Page Number	LINE NUMBER	CURRENT WORDING	SUGGESTED CORRECTED WORDING	NTSB RESPONSE
71	4	seven	open	Do not agree
71	15	the seating	to sea	AGREE
72	13	track	tracked	DO NOT AGREE, Transcript correct as is
75-78	ALL	NOT QUESTIONS BY "MR. KYNE"		AGREE – SHOULD BE "MR. YOUNG"
79	6	48	4 to 8	AGREE
80	16	was were	were	DO NOT AGREE, Transcript correct as is
80	25	we're	were	DO NOT AGREE, Transcript correct as is
82	2	MFHF	MF/HF	DO NOT AGREE, Transcript correct as is
82	4	DFC	DSC	AGREE
82	5	Visual	Digital	AGREE
82	11	4-6	406	AGREE
86	6	note	not	AGREE
86	10	that	that was	DO NOT AGREE, Transcript correct as is
86	11	even	event	AGREE
86	12	to oppose	opposed to	DO NOT AGREE, Transcript correct as is
88	5	Kevin	Captain	AGREE
90	11	trains	cranes	AGREE
	8	there. Their	their	DO NOT AGREE, Transcript correct as is

91				
91	8	is	as	DO NOT AGREE, Transcript correct as is
91	11	call	called	AGREE
97	23	be	being	AGREE
97	23	that it's	it's	DO NOT AGREE, Transcript correct as is
98	21	safety,	safety	Do not agree. Sounds like "safety sensitive positions"
99	8	swap	swab	AGREE
102	19	all	both	AGREE
105	25	intec	Intec	AGREE
106	22	we	I	DO NOT AGREE, Transcript correct as is
107	3	chat	SAT	AGREE
107	13	free	pre-	AGREE
107	16	line	alarm	AGREE
107	21	lift	lift the	AGREE
109	15	some	come	AGREE
110	25	emergency response team	Emergency Response Team	AGREE
114	19	track	tracked	AGREE